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on

"Writing and Contemplation"

(With introduction by Sister Thérèse, S.D.S.)

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Review of significant American and foreign books; reports from Italy, France, Germany, Spain, and South America.

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EDITORIAL

IN AN era characterized by mass-produced and mass-consumed culture, it is difficult to overemphasize the importance and significance of the critical review.

It addresses itself to that small audience which is willing to read seriously serious matter. It cannot hope to be widely popular nor can it expect to attain a great circulation.

In our generation it is a sign of health and vitality that there are so many "little magazines"—for so they are called—unwilling to compromise their standards with commercialization and mass-appeal and dedicated to an effort to make the best prevail.

That such magazines may degenerate into cults and coteries of mutual admiration, "of acquainting unpopular writers with one another's writing" is, of course, a danger. Their ideal, however, is not invalidated—an ideal forcefully stated by Allen Tate: "The task of the critical magazine is not to give the public what it wants, or what it thinks it wants, but what—through the medium of its most intelligent members—it ought to have . . . It assumes that the public needs something that it does not want, or—what is the same thing—that a minority wants what the greater public needs."

The most outstanding critical quarterly of our time, *Criterion*, edited by T. S. Eliot, attained a circulation of hardly more than two thousand. In all of the United States, with over 140,000,000 people, there seem to be only two serious monthly magazines at all general in their appeal—*Harper's* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. Even their audience is small and limited, and their circulation has by no means kept pace with the increase of population.

Renascence: A Critical Journal of Letters is committed to the belief that in America we very much need a serious review devoted to a critical evaluation of the Catholic revival of letters. It has the confidence, too, that there is a large enough audience to sustain such a periodical.

Some readers will not be interested in the internal affairs of the magazine. But everyone concerned with the status of culture in America should know that none of our critical journals—even the best of them—is able to pay its own way without the generosity of patrons and benefactors.

In its first year *Renascence: A Critical Journal of Letters* has had a modest success. Its effectiveness in the future will depend upon those who are themselves willing to believe—and to demonstrate by their support—that the cause of Catholic letters is important in the contemporary world.

—J. P.

The Blood of Robert Lowell

BY FRANK O'MALLEY

THE blood of some of the greatest poets of the English tradition runs in the veins of the prodigious young American poet, Robert Lowell. His poetry has the accent and gait of Shakespeare, Donne, Dryden, Blake, Hopkins and Eliot. I must note, in addition, the continuous flow in Lowell of the turned-inside-out intensity of Rilke and of the marvelous misery of Rimbaud and Baudelaire. And since Lowell has absorbed into his imagery and symbolism the heritage—classical, maritime and puritan—and environment of New England (more specifically, Boston), some critics might be drawn to place him in a lineal perspective with Robert Frost. But I should say that the current, however lovely, crossing the poetry of Frost is, comparatively with that of the new poet, anaemic. Rather I find, taken into the movement of Lowell's work from the writers of the American world, something of the twist and wrench of Hawthorne and Melville. Yet Robert Lowell's blood is still his own blood—and one has to take him really unto himself. For he is a rare, an originative, a powerful genius of poetry, who has transmuted and transformed all influences, ancient and modern, all experiences into the packed, pounding pressures of his own insight and of his own—often startling—idiom.

There are available rumors of how deep and furious is the personal spiritual and emotional struggle in the life of this remarkable man. Rumors, however, are not required. The signs, the exertions of his agony are seared into his poetic statement—although, like the utterance of Shakespeare or Donne or Blake or Hopkins, all fundamentally "personal" poets, that of Robert Lowell has an enormous objectivity. Strange to consider is the objective, clean, striking stringency of artists whose personalities leap and flame with their own memories and experiences (and with their response to the experiences of others), whose hearts, like Lowell's, "beat faster, faster." Lowell writes* in the red-hot compulsion of his naked heart:

My heart, you race and stagger and demand
More blood-gangs for your nigger-brass percussions.

(Colloquy in Black Rock)

In the heart of this Christian poet, whose feeling for, whose compassion I had better say, for the stricken, crazy life of men and of all creatures in a

*All Lowell quotations are from *Lord Weary's Castle* (New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1946).

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bewildering, brutal civilization, is painful to the point of violence, there rises a not unnatural pessimism:

While we live, we live
To snuff the smoke of victims. In the snow
The kitten heaved its hindlegs, as if fouled,
And died.

(*New Year's Day*)

In one passage, with full phrasal and emotional echoes of Eliot and Rimbaud, the "bloody waters" of the Atlantic tumble into the torrent of Lowell's dark-mindedness:

This is the end of them, three-quarters fools,
Snatching at straws to sail
Seaward and seaward on the turntail whale,
Spouting out blood and water as it rolls,
Sick as a dog to these Atlantic shoals:
Clamavimus, O depths. Let the sea-gulls wail
For water, for the deep where the high tide
Mutters to its hurt self, mutters and ebbs.
Waves wallow in their wash, go out and out,
Leave only the death-rattle of the crabs,
The beach increasing, its enormous snout
Sucking the ocean's side.
This is the end of running on the waves;
We are poured out like water.

(*The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket: IV*)

We are poured out like water. This poet insists: we are poured out, we are wasted!

For Lowell, as for Blake and Eliot, modern existence strains and parches and perishes in an oceanic wasteland. In Blakean lines that cauterize, with sharpest poignancy and most terrible anguish, he delivers over the waste of our life and world in warfare:

The massed battalions flounder into fire
Until the furnace of affliction turns
A hundred thousand men to stone and burns
The poor dead in the summer grass.

(*War*)

And from the scaffold of our horror, a hanged voice speaks now with frightening knowledge:

My human brothers who live after me,
See how I hang. My bones eat through the skin
And flesh they carried here upon the chin
And lipping clutch of their cupidity . . .
My brothers, if I call you brothers, see:
The blood of Abel crying from the dead
Sticks to my blackened skull and eyes.

(*France*)

ROBERT LOWELL

In an age practically dedicated to warfare, what can our efforts to establish community come to?

When we try to kiss,
Our eyes are slits and cringing, and we hiss;
Scales glitter on our bodies as we fall.

(Between the Porch and the Altar: II)

This is the oppressive spectacle of the times. No wonder, then, to have the poet cry out that "my bones are trembling," that "the clocks are tolling. I am dying." We live, the poet indicates, in a sort of spider's tangle, in a state "where spiders stare their eyes out at their own spitting and knotting likeness."

Again, Lowell suggests that our universe sometimes seems a vast satanic circus, our world a Ferris wheel, tired, stooping and lifting "into the tent pitched for the devil." Yet, the poet declares, "the man works loose."

He drags and zigzags through the circus hoops,
And lion-taming Satan bows and loops
His cracking tail into a hangman's noose;
He is the only happy man in Lent
He laughs into my face until I cry.

(The First Sunday in Lent: II)

And the cry of man in the throat of Robert Lowell can be dread and bitter: "All day the wastes of snow about my house"; "I am cold: I ask for bread, my father gives me mould." Man, swamped by the desperation of these present times, must moan:

My way is wayward; there is no way out:
Now how the weary waters swell,—
The tree is down in blood!
All the bats of Babel flap about
The rising sun of hell.

(The Slough of Despond)

Still, this poet passes, like Dante and Blake, like Hopkins and Eliot, out of the heavy, mucky, maddening inferno of spiritual suffering and darkness. He, too, achieves his paradiso, his most brilliant meanings and resolutions, spreading like rays from a center—because he is a strong poet of Christ, Who, through His Birth and Passion and Crucifixion, proffers redemption to every man and every moment and gives significance to man's agony of life. Here at the pitchpoint of all historical experience, at the point of Christ, here, as Eliot says, "the past and future are conquered, and reconciled." Lowell acknowledges this reality as thoroughly as Eliot. And, like Hopkins and Claudel, his consciousness, his whole being indeed—as revealed in his work—is flooded with the Blood of Christ. (The true blood of Lowell is not that of any merely literary transfusion or of any provincial aristocratic culture-coagulation.) By this

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fact, he is a poet of the authentic Catholic tradition, a poet of Christ as the Force and Pivot of all creation and of all human experience. His expression of this consciousness is not, I think, so elaborate and fulsome as in Hopkins, so clear and prolonged as in Claudel; but it is, when it appears, just as real and just as wonderful.

Lowell seems to understand very well how "the Child is born in blood, O child of blood." He understands equally well how the throb of the Blood of the Child has been checked, how it has been drained of its power in a degenerative "Christian" civilization, swarming—uneasily—with its calculative, death-bringing reversals and perversions of all vital Christ-values. In our cold crowding and dealing where is Christ the Tiger?

Cold

Snaps the bronze toes and fingers of the Christ
My father fetched from Florence, and the dead
Chatters to nothing in the thankless ground
His father screwed from Charlie Stark and sold
To the selectmen. Cold has cramped his head
Against his heart: my father's stone is crowned
With snowflakes and the bronze-age shards of Christ.

(Winter in Dunbarton)

And the poet, in an image reminiscent of Dante's lowest ice of Hell, observes the confused gyrations of the "progress" of modern man through his de-Incarnationalized and, therefore, barren and loveless and hell-plunging history:

O Christ, the spiralling years
Slither with child and manger to a ball
Of ice; and what is man? We tear our rags
To hang the Furies by their itching ears,
And the green needles nail us to the wall.

(Christmas in Black Rock)

Nevertheless, "Christ God's red shadow hangs upon the wall." So the poet intimates that, though "we are old" and "our fields are running wild," Christ can still for us "turn wanderer and child," that is, if we do not wilfully, diabolically obstruct, He can still enter into and heal the broken heart of modern life, penetrating our mechanic and murderous complexity with His more complex simplicity, bathing our senile and cynical urbanity with His more profound innocence. The sorrow of this world, Lowell says, is the sorrow of

King Herod shrieking vengeance at the curled
Up knees of Jesus choking in the air,
A king of speechless clods and infants. Still
The world out-Herods Herod.

(The Holy Innocents)

ROBERT LOWELL

It is the sorrow of the wilful, traitorous, serpentine violation of Christian innocence and of the wisdom of such innocence. But over the hideous "serpent-Time," the poet hears wings beating, sees hovering the humble dove of Jesus:

What can the dove of Jesus give
You now but wisdom, exile? Stand and live,
The dove has brought an olive branch to eat.

(Where the Rainbow Ends)

The passages just cited are sufficient, I believe, to verify Lowell's claim to be called, with Hopkins and Claudel, an Incarnational-Redemptive poet. For, although the burden of his themes and statements may appear to be darkling, Christ is really and finally the Form of Lowell's poetry, the Pure Fire that breaks and blazes through the gruesome jungle-gloom. Christ is, in Gertrud von le Fort's phrase, "the true form of the world." Like Hopkins, Lowell witnesses and is afflicted to the depths by the smearing and obliteration of the Christ-Form in modern civilization. Thus originates what I might call the *bloodedness* of the poet's judgment, the ruthless heat of his honesty in assessing the depravities and vacuities of the world he knows, its culture a formless aesthetical or academic routine, its church a dead shack. Out of Christ, out of the Child and the Cross, Lowell, like Hopkins, derives the right and rank and privilege of judgment—and of humanity and of poetry. (The wisdom of the old words of Chaucer may be remembered here: "For soothly, oure swete lord Jesu Crist hath spared us so debonairly in our folies, that if he ne hadde pitee of manne's soule, a sory sange we mighten alle singe.") Actually, the fierce physical energy surging in the hazardous, gory images, in the well-hammered, harrowed tones and in the tough, tidal rhythms of Lowell's poetry (his way with language is, of course, invariably elemental, sometimes overwhelmingly Hopkinsesque) is generated by the poet's energy of spirit, a blood of soul, of the soul that has fastened its gaze at the Crib and at the Hole the Cross made.

In a now famous letter to Jean Cocteau, Jacques Maritain has remarked that "in man nothing is easy. It is not easy to be a poet, it is not easy to be a Christian, it is doubly difficult to be both at once." These difficulties, I am certain, are especially well-known to Robert Lowell. He knows undoubtedly that it is not easy to be a poet, despite the immediate eminence attained by his small output, the extraordinary praise given his work by such first-rate fellow poet-critics as Allen Tate and John Berryman and Randall Jarrell. He knows too, I have been told, of the hardships (exacerbated by the disconcerting inquietudes peculiar to his private life) of being a Christian, of the bloody

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harassments, the wrestling with Christ that Hopkins brought alive into these grating lines:

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there.

And I wonder if, adapting a thought of Pascal, some might not say truthfully of the life of Lowell: that all his miseries show his greatness, that his evident greatness grows out of his very wretchedness, the wretchedness "of a nobleman, of a deposed king."

One does have to conclude, however, that Lowell has succeeded, at least within the context of his work, in being both poet and Christian at once—and in a surpassing fashion. I have described him, in a recent lecture, as a *poet of necessity*, that is, a poet whose blood and being urgently actuate, inform his utterance. His poetry has moral vigor that does not deteriorate into the pietistic and moralistic; it has the potency of sentiment that does not ever slobber off into the soft and sentimental. Lowell satisfies, phenomenally, the criteria which Rilke once suggested for the writing of even a single poem. He has seen "many cities and men and things." He can return to "days of childhood that are still indistinct and to parents." He can return "to the sea itself, to oceans." He has also been "beside the dying." Yet, as Rilke indicates, memories and experiences are not sufficient: "Only when they have turned to blood within us, to glance and gesture, nameless and no longer to be distinguished from ourselves—only then does it happen that in a most rare hour the first word of a poem arises in their midst and goes forth from them." Robert Lowell's memories and experiences—and the most central and magnificent and moving of all his experiences and memories is Christ, in Claudel's unforgettable terms, "the center and navel of the world"—have turned to blood within him. In this way has his poetry risen wonderfully and gone forth from him: out of his blood, out of his life caught wild and dangerous and drowning in the undertow of Christ's Blood.

Mr. Eliot's Historical Decorum

BY HERBERT MARSHALL McLUHAN

IS IT not the case that the novel attempts an experiment in the conduct of life under controlled conditions? Does it not set out to present a set of characters that are involved in a sequence of incidents which are in some sense, however vague, causally linked? The selection of time and place, of characters and incidents, has, it seems, a goal not unlike that of the experimental psychologist. Stendhal said his procedure was to imagine a group of ordinary people, to involve them in the ordinary consequences of ordinary unreflective stupidity, and then to endow them with brains in order that they might suffer and struggle in a more interesting way.

Flaubert was more subtle. He arranged things so that the brains and perception had to be supplied by the reader. His epiphanies occur mainly by the analogical method of juxtaposition, and his episodes are not causally linked so much as set side by side or at such distances from one another as will cause the maximal excitement of analogical intelligibility. The result has been that he is read, for the most part, as a realist or as a cynical romantic of some sort. Proust, perhaps, was not equal to this lesson, but Joyce and Eliot certainly were. For our time, at least, Flaubert was the first major practitioner of symbolist technique.

Symbolism never meant anything vague to Mallarmé, having little in common, say, with what we encounter in Blake or early Yeats. This is clarified in the library section of *Ulysses*, where Joyce ironically links A. E. Eglington and the current nationalist poetry to Blake's "eternity of which this vegetable world is but a shadow" and presents through them a corresponding ironical image of Mallarmé and his Hamlet who walks the world only to read "the book of himself." This image is the exact opposite of the activity of Joyce and of the Mallarmé that Joyce at that time knew better than anybody else. To read not in the book of the self but in the book of the existent and subsistent world, the world of the incarnate logos, where the least letter is resplendent with intellectual radiance, that was the esthetic task of Mallarmé, but of Joyce especially.

"Symbol" means to "throw together," to juxtapose without copula. And it is a work that cannot be undertaken nor understood by the univocalizing, single plane, rationalist mind. Existence is opaque to the rationalist. He seeks essences, definitions, formulas. He lives in the concept and the conceptualizable. Ideally, in a world of essences, actually, in a state of complete inanition. Cut off from the nutriment of existence, his very postulates discourage him from that loving and disciplined contemplation of existence, of particulars.

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Symbolist art supremely so. So that you cannot have a general notion of a symbolist poem any more that you can reduce a metaphor to some other kind of statement. And since many people like to get "the general idea" of a poem before risking any effort, they have been especially baffled by Joyce and Eliot. But it may be questioned whether such people can read any poetry whatever.

Metaphor is analogy of inequalities, an exact juxtaposing in a state of tension of two situations and requiring high intelligence to bring it off. Each situation usually includes a great multiplicity and diversity of existence. Taking for a moment the familiar line presenting Lucy as "a violet by a mossy stone," one can hear a thousand voices drawing attention to its prettiness. Wordsworth, however, found it extremely exciting, for it contains his entire world. Any teacher of poetry up to the eighteenth century would have explored the analogy somewhat as follows: As a violet is to other flowers so is a mossy stone to other stones. All the qualities of a violet as distinct from other flowers are to be noticed—its delicacy, its special qualities when half hidden and protected by a mossy stone. The next level of the analogy involves Lucy. As Lucy is to other girls so is a violet to other flowers. As the violet is to the stone so is Lucy to nature and human society. Lucy is a product of isolation and social indifference. Her rare, wild grace and shy impulsiveness exist in a state of nice balance of natural endowment and massive but protective indifference. She startles us amidst casual experience of conventional society and human lumpiness as a *lonely* violet would where least expected. This is only to begin the exploration, not the reduction, of a complex situational analogy which is adjusted with the utmost precision of observation and language. The long tracts of dullness in Wordsworth are, in the main, rhetorical attempts to state directly what can only be given for analogical contemplation.

But the teacher and critic cannot give over the exploration of analogies until the reader achieves autonomous intellectual habits for seeing into language situations, so that the activity of the "new critics" far from having gone too far has merely disturbed the complacency of a few people without yet revolutionizing decadent habits of inattention to language. It was, of course, the new poetry that produced the new criticism. And the degree of success which anybody attains in the reading of earlier poetry is necessarily dependent on the quality of his awareness of contemporary art. There is no other door from any present to any past.

It would really take many pages to explore the violet by a mossy stone. This procedure would, by comparison and contrast, set this situation beside the numerous analogues in Wordsworth (and other poets as well) as where he refers to Lucy as "the sweetest thing that ever grew beside a human door." This is a startling situation and even more complex than that of the violet.

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A *thing* not a girl, *beside* not *in* a doorway. And not a door but a "human door." Maritain looks at this matter of sudden juxtaposition without copula; Reverdy said:

The image is a pure creation of the mind. It cannot emerge from a comparison but only from the bringing together of two more or less distant realities . . . An image is not striking because it is *brutal* or *fantastic*—but because the association of ideas is remote and exact . . . A striking image, on the contrary, one new to the mind, is produced by bringing into relation without comparison two distant realities whose relations *the mind alone* has seized.

Maritain continues:

This passage must be kept in mind, if modern poetry and poetry in general are to be understood . . . In a more general way I have already observed elsewhere . . . the most striking and unforeseen images used by the poets may perhaps owe their origin to the difficulties man experiences when he wants to tell himself and make himself really *see* the commonest things with the help of the imagery of language, difficulties which compel him to renew that imagery.—(*Art and Scholasticism*, 1947, p. 147).

Joyce and Eliot seldom say anything *about* anything. Even their statements present a great many situational analogies some of which require an *ardent* intelligence to apprehend. And all analogies call at the least for careful contemplation. And it is for the lack of ordinary care that language decays and the human mind falls into apathy which now speaks to us in the insatiable demands for banality and violence.

Since metaphor is so intellectual a figure it naturally is not especially heeded where poetry is regarded as an assembly of thoughts and sentiments *about* some topic. Hamlet *says* many of the things that any schoolboy of the sixteenth century put in his copybook. But it is Hamlet's *situation* that commands attention. His relations with himself, his family, friends, and the state are situationally analogous for many other men, and always will be. Analogy institutes tension, polarity, a flow of intellectual perception set up among two sets of particulars. To merge those two sets by an attempt to *reduce* a metaphor situation to some single view or proposition is the rationalist short-circuit which long ago destroyed the charge and intellectual excitement of poetry for most educated people.

The beauty of the "violet by a mossy stone" is certainly not pictorial except incidentally, but consists in the intricate proportions existing between violet and Lucy, stone and civilization and the mind. And these proportions are rich in ontological radiance just as surely as they are, like the proportions of all metaphors, deficient in conceptual clarity. To have reduced Wordsworth to prettiness, and to have impoverished his intellectual perception by

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transforming ontological mystery into the trite and banal is the natural work of the rationalist mind. When Wordsworth is himself he is as complexly difficult as any great poet. He is never a poet for the young. "It is a Cartesian error to reduce *absolute* brilliance to brilliance *for us*. Such an error produces academicism in art and condemns us to such a poor kind of beauty as can give only the meanest pleasures to the soul." (*Art and Scholasticism*, p. 23).

It is not easy to see to what status those would assign poetry who would assume that it demands less effort than modern mathematics or physics? And yet we rightly assume that a Dante, a Chaucer, a Spenser, a Dryden, a Milton, or even a Shelley knew intimately the sciences, all the sciences, and also the philosophy and theology of his time. To what end? That he might popularize or render them picturesque? But today we answer that the unity of the sciences and philosophy is broken. Therefore poets and the readers of poetry may rejoice in emotion and ignorance. Fortunately the best poets have ignored this fiction so flattering to indolence and have produced a poetry at the very least commensurate with the achievements of modern physical science. And this has been done with the aid of certain artistic discoveries of a technical kind.

One of the principal technical innovations of modern art was made by Edgar Poe, a fact fully appreciated by the French, who had the wit to follow him, and by Joyce, Eliot, and others who had the resources to follow them. As Valéry explained it when contemplating the methods of Leonardo and Poe, they had minds which moved intuitively to the fulcrum points of their times, where by a slight shift of emphasis any existing art or science could be radically modified. Leonardo invented perspective in painting, and, by implication the camera which necessarily brought pictorial perspectivism to an end. Poe invented the detective story, and, by implication the movie camera which artistically speaking brought the novel to an end. For the detective story and the movie camera are alike in this that the "mystery" is "solved" by arranging "stills" (investigation of clues) and then, having set them in chronological sequence (montage), the sleuth "reconstructs the crime" for himself and his audience merely by running off the "film" so constructed. The criminal is automatically (cinematically) revealed.

But this was the least important aspect of Poe's discovery, being a mere by-product of what he saw to be the supremacy of *effect*. And a story or poem to produce a *single effect*, to have the utmost esthetic unity, must also be written backwards. Anything not conducing to that effect can by this procedure be eliminated and maximum intensity can be achieved. A further consequence of this discovery was developed by Mallarmé who saw that a poetry of *effects* was impersonal. The author effaced himself above all in not assigning causes or explanations as transitional devices of a novelistic and a

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pseudo-rationalistic type between the parts of the poem. Poetry could free itself at last from rhetoric and the novel. Insofar as a *rationale* of poetry was needed it is to be found naturally in the analogical drama of the very action of the intellect itself in *making poetry*. A precisely similar situation exists in metaphysics as Maritain explains in *Existence and the Existent* (pp. 23-24). Whereas "essences are the object of the first operation of the intellect, or simple apprehension, it is *judgment* which the art of existing confronts . . . Thus existence is made object; but as I pointed out earlier, in a higher and analogical sense resulting from the objectizing of a trans-objective act . . . Here a concept seizes upon that which is not as essence but is an intelligible in a higher and analogical sense, a super-intelligible delivered up to the mind in the very operation which it performs each time that it judges, and from the moment of its first judgment." (*Existence and the Existent* is the best "companion" to *Four Quartets*).

To make an existential drama from the analogical activities of the mind in making (and reading) poetry, that is what is meant by "pure poetry." But "purity" implies no exclusion of the commonplace. Quite the contrary. Mallarmé saw at once that for this new art all existence was grist. The unconscious symbolist technique of juxtaposed items in newspapers he heralded as a parody of poetry, a very different thing from the opposite of poetry. The most banal figures of pulp literature he saw would serve as well as the most intricately presented characters in getting the needed *effects*. Only the essential business of poetry has been shifted from the decorum of subjects and materials to the precise analogical manipulation of the same. It has often been noticed that the "characters" of Henry James, Joyce, and Eliot are very ordinary types, a fact which permits a greater rather than a less degree of precise inter-relationships.

The esthetic error of the past said Mallarmé was to try to get efficient causes into the work of art as a means of rendering attitudes and actions plausible. But real poetic plots have no need of extrinsic causes. Yet most of the exegesis of Joyce and Eliot has so far been occupied in providing just such "causes" or copulas for the imagery and characters. At that level of novelistic awareness any old "plot" will do. The more the merrier. Dozens of such plots can be almost equally relevant simultaneously. For example, the initial situation in *Prufrock* or *Gerontion* is inclusive of every mode and metamorphosis or schizophrenia from the shaman to the medium and the poet, on one hand, and of every combination of ultimate disappointment and rage, on the other hand. The number of possible case histories of people having such experience is the number of possible "explanations" of the state of *Prufrock* and *Gerontion*. For this kind of poem while not written primarily to this level of attention does include, incidentally, a large number of

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comedies and melodramas. So that whenever anybody turns up with such a plot for one of his poems Mr. Eliot can only nod acquiescence. He is not interested in plots or case histories which trace by cause and effect the stages leading to a particular situation. He is interested in the situation which exhausts all such causes and effects and includes further levels of analogical perception.

An illustration of what is partly involved in this artistic innovation emerges from a comparison of *Redgauntlet* and *Wuthering Heights*, the latter often appearing to be a symbolist handling of the former narrative. Redgauntlet is the implacable Jacobite, for whom life is passion, pitted against a variety of shades of Whigs for whom life is an affair of careful prudential arrangements. The Redgauntlet way *vs.* the Fairford way. What Emily Brontë did with this rambling narrative was to omit Scott's historical perspectives by which he "explains" the origin of the tragic way of Redgauntlet and the accommodating way of the Fairfords. Brontë presents the contrast between Heathcliff and the Lintons immediately, and Heathcliff gains by being cut off from historical and social conditioning as surely as Redgauntlet loses by being made "intelligible" in that way. The reader of *Redgauntlet* can be sympathetic or detached since the action is embedded in material remote from him. But the reader of *Wuthering Heights* is unavoidably involved, having to pitch his entire experience into the action which is relatively free from novelistic motivations or the conditioning of place and time. And such is the character of all symbolist art. Every image (from the first line of *Prufrock*, for example) demands the whole attention, and constitutes a constant revaluation of the present and past of any reader's experience. Yet it is not so much the infinite variety of experience that is in play as the multiple analogical ratios between experiences that must be apprehended by each reader. In a word, the symbolists in discovering the technique of rigorous effect also closed the gap between the writer, the poem, and the reader. All are henceforth involved in a common action, language itself becomes the material of the plot, and the movements of the mind become, in a figure, the phases of the action. You are the music while the music lasts.

Mr. Eliot saw this clearly when confronted with *Ulysses* which he said employed a technique as decisively new as any revolution in the physical sciences. Henceforth no serious artist can proceed as though that discovery did not exist. "In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations . . . Instead of narrative method, we may now

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use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art . . ."

But it is not merely the parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity with all that implies of multivocation, intensity and economy, which Mr. Eliot manipulated, but, from *Ash Wednesday* on, that between the stairs of the mind and the levels of poetic and spiritual awareness, between Mallarmé and St. John of the Cross, between the incarnate logos (natural speech and existence) and the Divine Word in and out of time, a reworking in contemporary conditions of the vision of Dante. This work of encyclopedic unification was the unavoidable task imposed on the modern artist in an age of great knowledge and rapid dissolution. It was likewise enjoined on the philosopher and accepted by Maritain. Anything less than heroic fortitude and supreme vision would in our circumstances have been for poet and philosopher alike a bathetic breach of historical decorum.

Paris, May 1949

BY D. H. MOSELEY

IT IS due to the fact that the French presuppose literacy in Catholics, even to the extent of posting in the porticos of their churches information that would be announced from American pulpits or published in learned periodicals, that I knew of the conferences of *La Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques*. Literate enough for my needs, I paused, one afternoon in late April, to read a large poster near a doorway of the ancient Paris church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and learned that, in a hall connected with one of the city's newest churches, Sainte-Odile at the Porte Champerret, various leaders of Catholic thought would speak during the week of May eighth. Many of the names were familiar to me: Jacques Maritain, Stanislas Fumet, François Mauriac, Paul Claudel, Etienne Gilson and others. Careful directions regarding bus and métro routes to Sainte-Odile, days and hours and programs of the conferences, and the price of single admissions or an all-inclusive ticket (600 francs, less than three dollars) were furnished in the announcement. Tickets might be procured at the door or at *Le Centre des Intellectuels Catholiques*, 61 rue Madame. No need to inquire about ways or means, or to face raised eyebrows and quizzical lips. True, I was being lured to venture into the presence of the learned, but no acquaintance in France or America need be the wiser.

The evening of May 8, having spent the afternoon at a performance of Claudel's *Le soulier de satin* at the Salle Richelieu of the Comédie-Française,

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I went to the Salle Champerret (Sainte-Odile), a fairly large auditorium equipped with loud speakers. I arrived early, but so had numerous others, and I was fortunate to secure an aisle seat near enough to the platform for me to see the expressions of the speakers and yet so situated as to command a good view of the audience.

The appearance of the members of the audience interested me exceedingly, for this was the first time I had been in such a group since the days before World War II. It seemed to me that faces were marked by the serenity that succeeds suffering courageously borne; they were intelligent, alert, the visages of thinkers and listeners, of men and women who love God with their minds as well as with their hearts. Present were a few women in religious garb, and there were numerous priests in soutanes and members of religious orders in habits, but the group was predominantly of mature lay people . . . almost no very young students there for the experience, as there might have been in the United States. Naturally, my mind was occupied with thoughts of what those about me had endured in the last decade, for they had lived through a hideous war and a ferocious occupation. Doubtless, some had thought themselves and their country defeated and had tried to wrest their shame to their spiritual good. Others had bravely refused to surrender even in their own minds and had been part of the Resistance. Whatever their course, they had been acquainted with misery and pain themselves and had known the agony of France. We would not see, in the United States, even at a university convocation, a more intelligent looking audience than that in the low-ceilinged basement auditorium awaiting the arrival of the Papal Nuncio, of Monsieur Robert Schuman, French Foreign Minister, of Monsignor Blanchet, Rector of the Institut Catholique of Paris, of the president and officers of the group of *Intellectuels Catholiques*, of Maritain, and other speakers of the evening. Now and then one of the young men in charge would go to the platform to adjust a microphone, or a murmur would run through the room when some celebrity arrived. Many were greeting each other with the formal, friendly ease characteristic of the French, and there was plenty of animated conversation in low tones. The stranger sitting next to me asked if I knew that Madame Maritain's new books were recently available in Paris, and I replied that I had already read them translated into English. There was something in the atmosphere that seemed begotten of long familiarity with the work and thought of those who would participate in the program; it would have been difficult to avoid emotional response to the keen interest and sympathy. Whatever the conference, to be in such an audience was an experience; it could not be the same thing to read the addresses later, no matter how important their content.

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When the Papal Nuncio, the president and secretary of the *Intellectuels Catholiques* and the speakers gathered on the platform, my attention was diverted from my neighbors to them. Ease and formality, so noticeable in the audience, marked their bearing, also. I believe it was Monsieur André Mounier who read the telegram from Monsignor Montini conveying Pope Pius XII's message to the assembly, and who outlined, in a brief speech, the purposes of the group of Catholic Intellectuals: the furthering of endeavor in the fields of philosophy, science and art, the publication of facts regarding progress in each field for interested members, as well as general information on aspects of Catholic approach to current questions. For me, the whole seemed summed up in the caption on the card of admission: "Faith in Jesus Christ and the World of Today." I had been thinking of French Catholics and of what we Americans owed them: Saint Isaac Jogues and his martyr companions in our wilderness; the Sulpicians, who staffed our first seminaries; the lonely missionaries who journeyed through our sparsely settled South and Middle West, teaching and baptizing. However the French may condemn themselves for certain dissensions and weaknesses, we know their inherent intrepidity.

When the president of the group addressed the audience, he was not unmindful of how the political body of France had been torn in the years since World War I. I remembered having heard Monsieur Maritain state his belief, prior to World War II and before the catastrophe seemed even imminent, that something like a confederation of states in Europe would have to come about eventually, but it was Maritain's more recent pronouncements on the healing of France itself, and especially the hope given to the country by his writings on the disasters of 1941, that the president stressed when introducing him. Maritain then spoke, and his address on the theme of the evening, *Qu'est-ce que croire?* was clean cut, simply worded. As is well known, his paragraphs, which often seem unduly involved when translated into English, are crystal-clear in his native tongue. That evening, he was at his best. Affable, as always, even a little whimsical at times, conscious that his references to Saint Thomas Aquinas were too numerous to appeal to those not such a Thomist as he, he went directly to the heart of the *séance*. He said that had mail communication been better (presumably he had been corresponding from Princeton University), he would have suggested as his topic not *Qu'est-ce que croire?* but rather *Les chemins de la foi*. And truly it was of the Ways of Faith that he spoke. There was something evangelical in his utterance. (He alluded to but two current books, Thomas Merton's *Seeds*

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of *Contemplation* and *The Seven Storey Mountain*).^{*} He stressed the Gospels, reminding his hearers that the Gospels speak, we listen, and stating that he hoped that in the new age which he believed to be beginning, men would read and meditate the Gospels; that in this new age Christians would lead, and that France would be in the vanguard, as formerly, stimulating Catholics to universal interests. Thus, very much at home, confident of sympathy and attention, he struck the keynote for that first *séance* and for those that followed, a belief in the God-given powers of thinking Catholics.

The subjects of subsequent conferences of the week were: *Situation des philosophies actuelles devant la foi*; *Foi et civilisation*; *Morale chrétienne et nouveaux aspects de la condition humaine*; *La liberté de l'art et de la littérature devant la foi*; *Dieu et cosmos—Vision chrétienne et vision scientifique de l'univers*; *La foi aux dimensions du monde*; *Le chrétien est-il de la terre*?

But it was May, and May in Paris! I did not go to all of the conferences, and I suspect that some of the *Intellectuels*, even those especially invited from afar for the week, did not either. The flowering chestnuts and the lilacs were in bloom, the streets were fragrant with lilies of the valley, and little first communicants tripped along holding up their snowy, long organdy frocks. Who could sit indoors too many hours? Probably the *Intellectuels* chose, as I did, the conferences of their preference.

Certainly, many must have wanted to hear Monsieur Paul Claudel and others who spoke Thursday night on *La liberté de l'art et de la littérature devant la foi* (art including, of course, the modern one of the cinema). The hall was packed. Monsieur Claudel presided and was the first speaker. Just as Maritain had seemed to me the Maritain of *Prayer and Intelligence*, so Claudel seemed the Claudel of *The Tidings Brought to Mary*. He was as conscious of his Christian message as the actors of the Comédie-Française, who declaim the lines of *Le soulier de satin*, are of the exquisite cadence of his writing. Here was nothing to trifle with, a question to handle deftly, delicately; but he was on sure ground. A little fatigued, perhaps, aware that some theatrical critics were finding two current plays of his authorship not altogether to their liking, he knew that most of his hearers had no doubt about the place of literature in Christian life, nor about his place in that literature. Surely, he must have been pleased by the frequency with which other speakers quoted his plays.

^{*} M. Maritain's address has been published with others of *La Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques* by the Editions de Flore. The volume, *Foi en Jésus-Christ et Monde d'Aujourd'hui* was received in the United States after this was written. See page 28 for M. Maritain's comments on the large sale of Merton's books, and his words: "... ce n'est là qu'un indice minime, mais qui m'intéresse particulièrement, parce que, depuis bien des années, je pense que le pays le plus actif du monde est travaillé par un obscur désir de la contemplation."

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Monsieur Stanislas Fumet's address was remarkable, not only for the skill with which the theme under discussion was developed, but also for the really classical beauty of its periods; his listeners were enthralled. Of particular interest to me was Monsieur Michel Florisoone's talk on modern religious art and church architecture; I have no brief to hold for either, but I was thoroughly delighted by the enthusiasm of the speaker. Convinced that Christian artists and architects must employ modern lines and techniques, the style understood by their contemporaries, he had the zeal of one out to convert. The Church of Sainte-Odile, in whose shadow we were, with its modern windows and lighting, its elongated statues, its comfortable seating arrangements and system of loud speakers, has had its critics. There will always be conservatives, of course, but, ere that evening was over, I was ready to concede that Chartres probably shocked those of the Middle Ages.

I had cause to be thankful that Sainte-Odile was modern, for, when I reached the Salle Champerret for the final conference, it was filled, and the overflowed audience was in the church. By means of the loud speakers, we heard the discourse on the final topic, *Le chrétien est-il de la terre?* I shall never forget the pathos of François Mauriac's voice. In it was the weariness of nearly half a lifetime spent in showing how man, being of the earth, does or does not rise above it; the tragedy of *Le noeud des vipères* was there, and of his other novels. Here, again, the keynote was natural to the initiator of the discussion, and, when Graham Greene, in vibrant English, carried on with an assertiveness far removed from the deliberate detachment of his serious novels, such as *The Heart of the Matter*, the atmosphere was quite electric. It was a great compliment to the English speaker that the second round of applause, after his address translated into French had been read, was even more enthusiastic than the first. Julian Marias and Monsignor Grosche spoke ably in French. The final speech of that last conference was Cardinal Suhard's. Extremely touching for its faith and hope and forthrightness at the time, it seems doubly so in retrospect, for a fortnight later, he died.

It was fitting, of course, that *La Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques* should have come to a close on a Sunday, and that there should have been High Mass in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. The vast nave was filled. Stationed near a sculptured column, close to the pulpit, I listened to Monsignor Blanchet's address to those who were expected to give testimony of the Light. When, at the Consecration, all knelt and adored, the hope implicit in Maritain's speech rose in my heart, the hope that those who love God with their whole minds will be given wisdom and grace and courage to lead the world to Him.

Art and Faith

BY PAUL CLAUDEL

Editor's Note: This article by Claudel and the following one by Mauriac are their reflections on the conferences of *La Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques* which are summarized by D. H. Moseley in the preceding report.

THE truth shall make you free, says the Gospel. In the presence of this revealed Truth, of which the Catholic church is the depositary, it is not a question of negotiating, for art and literature, a concordat between two domains whose frontiers are jealously defined and guarded, but rather of an espousal between them, a marriage like that of a wife who seeks from the husband whom she has chosen, liberation in an embrace at the same time that she seeks security in Faith. In regard to inspiration, of which my friend Paul Valéry has written so much, which moreover his magnificent art contradicts at times, I believe that we will understand its nature better if we call it its true name, *aspiration*.

Each soul bears within itself unknown forces which, to be made manifest, require from without the soul that which shares with it a reciprocal need. When we read that on Pentecost Sunday tongues of flame appeared above the heads of the Apostles, we know that the flames found there a fitting food to feed upon, at the same time transforming that very oil into splendor. "I shall bring forth from the midst of you," says the prophet Isaías, "a light that shall devour you." The scriptures delight in describing the accomplishment of this sign. The angel passes a burning coal over the lips of Isaías and the other prophets and instantaneously after the example of Moses, they begin to stammer, "A, a, a." "A" is the first letter of the alphabet and is also the initial letter of the word "Abba," which means Father. It is the soaring of these two convergent lines which after having accomplished their work in the midst of a whole nation of vowels and consonants, attain their final destiny in the supreme recipient of the Omega. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me," says the prophet Isaías, "so that I may preach a release to captives," and what worse captivity than that of vice and vanity and of habit? "and deliverance to them that are shut up." . . . Who knows whether this does not have reference to that dark and stifling room in which poor Marcel Proust was incarcerated, that sinister laboratory which he had equipped to transform reality into nightmare?

I am not an advocate of art for art's sake. I do not believe that art has for its goal the building of idols of stone, of wood, and of paper, manikins more or less agreeably immobilized in their pose. I am not of those who believe that the Word (*Verbe*) can be replaced by the expression (*Mot*), a formula endowed with a magic incantation. I am not of the number who in applying their false Marxist theories attribute all the value of their art to the mere

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handiwork, to the *patte* of the worker. I believe that art consists above all in the power of communication and of passage, a sure passage, difficult, powerful and delicate, from the mind of the producer, to the soul of the person whom a French idiom names, the *consommateur*. There must be knowledge, but above all there must be *grace*. Grace is necessary. Would we say of the artist who has at his disposal means which are so subtle and so complex that he is *free*, free to abandon himself to his fancy? It is not liberty that he needs, it is deliverance, deliverance within himself, of this interior soul, of this sequestered Fury which has taken up arms! It is not a question, according to the expression of the psalm, of being "free among the dead." It is a question of opening a passage to the living and most often by the power of effort, of pressure and constraint preceded by a studious and thoughtful understanding of circumstances.

The truth shall make you free. Unthinking persons claim that the teaching of religion, ethics, and dogma are an impoverishment and constraint to the artist. It is almost as if you would say that textbooks of geometry and cosmography are an impoverishment for the surveyor and for the astronomer. Far from being an impoverishment, the joining of the invisible to the visible does more than enrich, it gives meaning to the visible and completes it. And as for constraint, since constraint there is, a hundred times happy constraint since it is this constraint which delivers us from the puerility of bondage! Blessed be the constraint of a vocation which impels the Genoese navigator toward the setting sun and which draws Michelangelo to the vaults of the Sistine Chapel. "When thou wast younger," said the Lord to Saint Peter, "thou didst gird thyself and walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not."

Another before Saint Peter had stretched forth His hands, another had needed this same fixed armature to support Him in that position which gave Him the measure and possession of the whole earth. Is it not remarkable that the Liberator of Humanity should have chosen a cross for a resting place and at the same time for an instrument to accomplish His work? Nothing strict enough, nothing severe enough for Him but this cross to which He willed to be attached, nailed there by His four members. But it is this cross which opens Him to the world and which opens the world to Him. It is this cross which snatches Him from the tomb and today still it is this wing, this pair of wings which is attached to the shoulders of every Christian, of every Christian artist, of every Christian poet, the "wings of the great Eagle" of which it is spoken in the Apocalypse.

Trans. by SISTER M. CAMILLE, O.S.F.

The Last Pillars of the Church

BY FRANCOIS MAURIAC

THE "Last Pillars of the Church" that mocking title given by Léon Bloy, is what I had in mind and applied to myself last Sunday, May 15, as I sat musing on the platform facing an assembly of people who had come together for the closing session of "The Week of Catholic Intellectuals." It was a vast assembly and certainly did not suggest that Catholicism in France is shrinking or weakening in the realm of thought. But in this realm as elsewhere, philosophy, science and technology are taking the lead over literature.

We must admit that the long line of Catholic men of letters starting with Chateaubriand (although we should undoubtedly go back to Pascal, whose *Pensées* are the source of all our literature that is Christian and *personnelle*) and continuing with Veillot and Barbey d'Aurevilly to Léon Bloy, with Huysmans to Péguy, Psichari and Bernanos, with Maurice de Guérin to Verlaine, Jammes and Claudel—that this long and illustrious line of witnesses seems to be interrupted, if not broken. Today one could not publish, as was done thirty years ago, a book entitled "Witnesses of the Catholic Revival" (*Les témoins du renouveau catholique*). This does not mean that the revival has ended. In France the old tree will never cease to bloom but the flowering is no longer evident, no longer expressed, in literature. Jacques Maritain opened "La Semaine des Intellectuels Catholiques" and I closed it. Claudel presided at one of the most important sessions. We three represent the old army. Its ranks are becoming thin.

Already, Bernanos has joined Péguy. Death has claimed them but death is powerless against their great works. Those of Bernanos will continue their way among men. But Bernanos, like Péguy, is defenseless in the hands of the embalmers. The second death of an author, that of his works, cannot always be attributed to a failure of the reading public to understand him nor to the sheer oblivion in which Barrès is lost today. How I fear for Bernanos the patient work of those who substitute for the imperfect creature torn by struggle, that is the living human being, a character made to their taste, adaptable to their purpose, and conforming to their ideas and standards!

Thanks be to God Claudel is still with us. From the Christian point of view, this great beacon was the light of my generation and of the one that followed. The rays of this light now project far beyond the human sphere into the heavens of Holy Scripture. In a certain sense his religious influence is posthumous.

Who will replace us? I am disturbed. I wonder . . . What silence! For the present the field of activity has shifted to England. The presence of

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Graham Greene beside me Sunday indicated that fact. By the applause which welcomed him, he could measure the place he occupies in Catholic France. In vain I looked for a French novelist, for a French poet. Daniel-Rops! He was there but he no longer belongs to the rising generation. In truth, the break came during his generation, the generation of Malraux, of Montherlant, the generation of the first surrealists. I wonder if surrealism may not be one of the forces to be blamed for this break in the Christian current. Its adherents hunted in the fields of religion. It was about 1920 when the devil turned loose into the vineyards of God such beautiful sleek foes as Aragon, Breton, Eluard, Soupault . . . It is strange that it should be a Thomist philosopher, Jacques Maritain, who fought them most successfully. But Maritain's little house at Meudon is closed now.

Sometimes one single man is able to turn the current of ideas into a different channel. When I speak with writers of the past twenty-five years, I am struck by the influence that Montherlant has had among them and even among those who would have been "of Christ." Montherlant, himself, by his background, by the best of his nature and by the very character of his style should have been a great branch of the river. But I fear he has merely lowered the level of the stream.

But I say again that, in phases other than literary, the Catholic revival has not lost its vigor. And, after all, truth can get along without men of letters. God may be weary of these chatterboxes who, in the end, come to prefer their works to Him, to love their works more than their souls.

—Trans. by SISTER M. LOYOLA, S.S.N.D.

Marie Noel and Her Poetry

BY PIERRE GIRARD

I

AMONG the many poets of contemporary France, Marie Noël has been outstanding for nearly thirty years. The appearance in 1921 of her first book, *Les Chansons et Les Heures*, was considered as one of the miracles of French poetry. Four more volumes have appeared since, and all of them have contributed to render even more secure the claim she should have to being considered as one of the most original poets of the Catholic world today.

Yet she has lived all her life modestly in Auxerre, Burgundy, which some people consider one of the most charming cities in France. Marie Noël was a rather sickly child and had to be educated at home. In her room, she set up a school for her dolls and wrote books for them. "These were my first poems," she has written. She was then eight years old. At twelve she went to the lycée, and learned there "all that she was taught." Her father tried to make her share his admiration for the great classical figures of Bossuet, Boileau, and Chateaubriand, and also for the philosophy of Kant. But she would rather follow the inclination of her own nature and read Pascal or La Fontaine—a curious but extremely interesting choice, as we shall see later.

How did she grow to be a poet? She, herself, does not know exactly. But she says that among the subjects which she liked best at school was music. She even composed little tunes which came to her naturally without effort. Her father, realizing her musical taste, would leave no talent undeveloped and made her study harmony. She admits, herself, that her papers were full of mistakes and that any sort of progress seemed impossible. After two years of fruitless efforts, she gave up harmony as a study, but not music. A miracle had happened—the miracle of poetic creation, which she relates in one sentence: "Looking for words for my tunes, a time came when I could find only words." What she so modestly calls "words" were in fact her first poems. They were the *Chansons de Cendrillon*. These she wrote in secret, but such a secret cannot be kept for long in a family. Her godfather, M. Périe, to whom she dedicated her first book, was a distinguished *lettré* and began to teach her the principles of prosody.

My inspiration at that time delighted in mystery, in the thrills of obscure words, in the leaps and bounds of the rhythm, without much consistency of thought. M. Périe taught me to write clearly, so as to be intelligible, which changed the course of my poetic manner. Had I not been corrected, I might have met surrealism somewhere. But I followed his direction, and I wrote the *Heures* in order to prove that I could get along with a twelve-syllable line, and I went back to my dear songs.

MARIE NOËL

Such were her first steps in poetry. She showed both a willingness to conform to the teachings of experience and at the same time the independence which is often the mark of genius. We all feel indebted to M. Périe for guiding the first attempts of his godchild, since from her rationalistic father Marie received at first little or no encouragement.

Her life seems to have been one of seclusion. Modest and unassuming, rather seeking to pass unnoticed, her only visible occupations were concerned with the care of her house and religion. Frequently visiting the church, she played the organ, sang in the choir, taught religion to the children of the parish, engaged in charitable activities—in short, she lived a very ordinary, provincial French existence. Although too often visited by sickness, her life has been singularly void of incidents. She seldom went to Paris and never stayed there long. More than anything else, she enjoyed staying in the country around Auxerre, with its hills covered with berry and apple trees and its prosperous farmyards. "It's religion, music, poor people, and also sickness which have taught me almost all I know, and that's not much," she often says.

II

AND yet on June 15, 1910, the well known *Revue des Deux Mondes* had published a few poems of hers without attracting much attention. Under the pen name, Marie Noël, it was not even easy to recognize Marie Rouget. In 1921 *Les Chansons et Les Heures* came out and almost immediately eminent critics such as Escholier, Brousson, Descaves, Bremond, Catholics and non-Catholics, hailed the new genius. The word *miracle* was used constantly. Indeed, there was a newcomer in the now large circle of what Calvet calls *Le Renouveau Catholique*, and an unexpected one. Although a strong classical culture had been bestowed upon her and she had read widely, she had completely kept apart from all the quarrels and discussions which seemed to be the daily bread of most other poets. Hers was a spontaneous, personal, simple song which had sprung forth from her soul in her remote provincial solitude. It was tainted by no literary snobism, no pretentious doctrine. Even if some of her lines may at times remind the reader of Jammes or Maeterlink, or even Claudel, none could say that she imitates them. Her first book of verse is divided in two very distinct parts, as indicated by the title: *Chères Chansons* ("The Songs"), which from her childhood had been singing in her, and the *Heures* composed along more classical lines under the influence of M. Périe. The spontaneousness, sincerity, and directness which are the main elements of her charm, are admitted and taken for granted from the very beginning:

Les chansons que je fais, qu'est-ce qui les a faites?
Souvent il m'en arrive une au plus noir de moi,
Je ne sais pas comment, je ne sais pas pourquoi.
C'est cette folle au lieu de cent que je souhaite.

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She cannot and will not put order to her thoughts. She is carried away by her own inspiration:

Chèvre, tête indomptée, ô passant, si rétive
Que nul n'osera mettre un collier à son cou.

What does she sing in her *Chansons*? Mostly her own solitude. It has its joy—the recurrent joys of Christmas and Easter and of Springtime. She is attentive to the slightest awakening of nature which brings so much mirth in its strain. The familiar detail of everyday life has also become a source of happiness. Thanks to her environment—her long stays in the country—she knows better than any other poet, perhaps, how to give significance to the humblest human action which becomes a synonym for joy or sorrow, whose depth is felt though the expression is always simple and complete. The *Chant de Pâques*, her song of the Resurrection, is not a powerful and sustained anthem. It is fresh and pure, like the song of a young country girl:

C'est Pâques—jetons dehors les poussières obscures,
Frottons de sable fin les clefs et les serrures
. . . . A-t-on cuit le gâteau d'avelines
Et mis sur la table un bouquet

She puts so much suggestiveness, so much poetry in the most banal detail that this is not only a song; it also is the picture of a country scene teeming and bustling with life, in which man and nature celebrate together the Resurrection.

But her solitude also has its sorrow. She has never known the great happiness of love and motherhood, and yet she was ready for them. She felt that her soul had much to offer to the creatures that might have come and filled her loneliness. Though she says, "Beauté, charme, esprit, je n'ai rien," there is a wealth of tenderness in her, but no one will have ever availed of it. "Nul n'aura profité de mon âme . . ." And here and there joy and pain are so closely interwoven by the yearning for a greater happiness and a better life that her tears are often ready to flow. And yet, "the soul dances, so as not to weep." (R. Escholier). In her straightforwardness and simplicity, she has rediscovered and preserved much of the vein of folk songs. The variety of the rhythms and highly musical flow of the lines, together with the light and dark expression which always sounds so spontaneous without elaboration—all these impart to her work the particular charm which is that of folk music, a direct inspiration which expresses itself without affectedness or bombast, and in which the idea and the words that convey it are, so to speak, born together without strain of effort. Just as Molière preferred the song of King Henry to the mannerisms of *La Préciosité*, many readers have preferred Marie Noël.

Les Heures is more pathetically religious. It is the story of her Christian soul offering to God the different actions of the day from morning to night.

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They were written at Vézelay, the picturesque village where St. Bernard preached the second crusade to a gathering of a hundred thousand knights. Marie could not have chosen a better place. The whole village leads up to the old Romanesque basilica, which raises its tower above the surrounding scenery. It certainly is one of the "lieux où souffle l'esprit." *Les Heures* are better composed than the *Chansons*. They follow the time-honored classical verse form, and Marie has less affection for this part of the book. Yet, some critics consider it as the most perfect of her verse, containing as it does so many new and living images.

It is a continuous meditation on the relations of God and his creatures; her own love of God, her confidence in Him, her genuine and unaffected humility, fill her lines with the joy that her faith arouses in her soul. She admits that she has known temptation. In the poem "A Sexte," she mentions the enticing allurements of nature, the "démon du midi," that lies in wait for the passing traveler. But she has little to do with sin and evil. We would not say that "Sexte" is typical of her inspiration. She is not a poet of passion. Even when she speaks of "l'amour au brusque visage" that love resembles more a spring of fresh water than a stream of fire. She sometimes feels her heart leap up, but it never burns with the sinful desires of temptation. She describes the pure enchantment of dawn or the warm delights of twilight better than the fullness of noon. And she feels protected by her confidence in God.

Car je te sais, ô Père, assis à mon chevet,
Et, si quelque vertige affole et perd mon âme,
Tu la retourneras vers toi comme une femme
Retourne dans le lit son petit qui rêvait.

"A Laudes" contains a number of lines which are at the same time pure poetry and a magnificent hymn sung to the Lord by the whole creation:

Je m'en vais dire une grande messe en la campagne,
Un coquelicot neuf sera mon sacristain,
L'enfant de chœur, mal défripé, qui m'accompagne,
Et j'aurai pour calice un lys de la montagne.

And in the morning still wet with dew and damp with mist, birds, trees, and flowers offer their actions to the Lord. Those who, like Marie herself, have nothing to offer, will give their songs and their joy.

What could be more pleasing than this affectionate understanding of Marie Noël for the whole creation, including animals, flowers, brooks, plants? Is it not the Franciscan spirit at its best? What could be more gratifying than the idea that the humblest action is worthwhile if it is meant for the glory of God?

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III

AND it is probably that kinship with other creatures that urged Marie Noël to publish in 1930 her *Les Chants de la Merci*. The poet is sometimes considered as the essence of egoism and, indeed, in her first book Marie Noël dealt chiefly with the story of her own soul; but she wanted to bring some relief to those who suffer. *Les Chants de la Merci*, she said in a short preface, were meant for the poor and the unfortunate. Her poetry is "habillée en pauvre." The inspiration which had dictated her song was not singing any more. The new book was not music; it was a message of pity; that is why she recently suggested that it should rather be called *Les Paroles de la Merci*. The songs were her own self expression; the lyrics were her fantasy. This was more like the epic of human misery in which she was almost forgetful of herself. The admirable line, "Moi, Seigneur, ô mon Dieu, je n'ai besoin de rien" sums up her whole attitude. But she became the one to whom every human suffering is so intense and who feels it so keenly in herself that "it will not let her rest." In this book, the poetry is "in the pity," to use Wilfred Owen's words—pity for all suffering, from the disenchantment of love, from the wounds and the strokes of death on the battlefield. As Marie Noël intimates in the preface, she strikes here a different note, and that may arouse in those who have loved the *Chansons* a slight disappointment. It is certainly less original, less personal than the songs, and yet in not a few lines, she is more powerful, more forceful and convincing than she has ever been. Never has physical pain been more strongly attacked than in the sublime "Bataille":

Pour m'élever au ciel, j'ouvrirai pas à pas
Dans ta chair les degrés d'une échelle vivante.
Je te commanderai, tu seras ma servante
Et je te crierai, "chante!" Tu chanteras.

Physical pain she knew only too well. It was an old customary visitor. And the whole book is haunted by the person of death:

"La minute . . .
Qui marche depuis ta naissance et qui viendra."

If she wonders so much at every manifestation of life, it is because she knows that the dulllest minute in life is dazzling when death prowls everywhere:

Petite minute, ah! si tu pouvais,
Toujours la même en ton ennui paralysée,
Durer encor, durer toujours, jamais usée.

Whereas in her songs she witnessed the triumph of life, here it is death which carries the day. Yet the final word of the book is not tinged by the somber colors of pain. A Seraphic chorus sings in heaven the anthem of praise and glory which hails the coming of a soul which on earth had known nothing

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but sorrow. The last poem, "Adam and Eve," Marie Noël's only attempt at religious philosophy, describes the conflict between death and sin on the one hand and love on the other, the greatness of self sacrifice and the prophecy, suggested, rather than told, that the Divine Love of God and the Maternal Love of Mary will give birth to the Saviour, whose love for mankind will mean Redemption. This has inspired a number of lines which compare with the best in French poetry:

Dieu, dont le sein éclate en naissances profondes
Le pain mangé riait d'amour comme la femme
Que l'homme prend et rompt pour la mêler à lui.

IV

ALMOST simultaneously the *Rosaire des Joies* was published, revealing another aspect of her talent. She, who had been the sensitive interpreter of human misery, became the "imagier d'église" and worked like a good craftsman to illustrate the story of Jesus. After the dark atmosphere of the *Chants de la Merci*, her Franciscan gaiety appeared again in her pictures of Jesus and his family and of the Annunciation and of Palm Sunday. It showed a sort of heartfelt joy, which expressed itself with a slightly feigned naïveté, and a sense of humor which are typical of Marie Noël at her best—what Bremond has called "Humour céleste," "Gaminerie angélique."

And, indeed, Marie Noël has a sense of humor and also wit. Her wit is always lenient and understanding. There is more kindness than sarcasm in it. Do not imagine her as a solemn, preaching, moralizing spinster. She is fond of talking, and her conversation is always lively. There is nothing mystical about her. She knows what's going on and likes to keep up with the news of the city. And it is the same vivacious familiar prattling manner that we have in her *Rosaire*. Her representations of Jesus and the saints are not like the sensuous and sumptuous Italian paintings or the mystical images of the Spanish masters. Just as the spirit of the *Chansons* went back to the ancestral traditions of folk songs, the inspiration of *Le Rosaire* is similar to that of the sculptors of the Middle Ages, who carved on the same capital the lofty figure of a saint and some realistic scene of contemporary life. Like some medieval character, Marie Noël sometimes addresses God or the saints with the familiarity and earthy wit used by the authors of mystery plays:

Car, si vous me laissez à l'abandon,
Ce vous serait, Seigneur, un bien piteux renom
De mauvais pâtre, et pour le soin de votre gloire,
A personne, ô mon Dieu, ne le donnez à croire.

All during the hasty preparation of the midday meal after the Annunciation, she thinks that "L'ange aurait bien pu nous aider un peu." Needless to say,

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she never gives any impression of disrespect and insolence. Jesus and the Virgin Mary, the angels, and the saints are so present, so actual, so alive to her that they are almost creatures of flesh and blood, living side by side in the same house, concerned and busy with the same occupation of daily life. And it is the actuality of their presence, their humanity, which brings them so near us. We do not have to imagine them; they are with us and like us, sharing our joys and sorrows.

Moreover, there is a dramatic and descriptive element in the *Rosaire*. She introduces many characters such as she sees every day around her. She is familiar with all the secrets of the humble. She knows what the farmer, the shepherd, the old man, the young country girl think and say. She knows how to make them speak. Even more than the songs, the *Rosaire* throws some light on French provincial types and life. In the book she herself hardly appears—just occasionally, much as the painter or the donor of old miniatures is represented in some corner of the image. It reminds us that the angel of the Annunciation also gave her a message, which is the essence of her poetry. Does one not feel that the Noël of the three spinsters is making a personal confession?—that tender and moving piece in which three spinsters, longing for a child they had never had, meet Mary in the stable and understand that God has sent them His Own Son to take care of. About the same time she wrote the *Chants Sauvages*, in which she was going back to the folk song inspiration and in a two-fold manner, since she also composed the music. This makes clear how closely the gifts of poetry and music were interwoven in her and represented the same type of expression. It also accounts for the great variety and the fluid, flowing character of her lines. Marie is particularly partial to the songs, and they may be her preferred verses. Her melodies are a little short, fleeting, and elusive, but they have a real charm. The words with their short, precise images, their recurring refrain, give the same impression of spontaneousness and simple sincerity. Among them, the "Last Dance" could be singled out as a perfect example of her art. It is a wedding song which tells the whole story of the bride and in which the ideas of life and death cannot be separated.

V

AND then a long silence. She was still writing, but seemed to be withholding any publication until after her death. Then last year, rather unexpectedly, the *Chants et Psaumes d'automne* came out. The title itself indicated a change, the word *Chants* implying a more sustained, more sedate, less spritely inspiration than the *Chansons*, less youthful too. She explains in the preface that the autumn of her life had witnessed a crisis during which she had lost sight of God. If she had kept away from the public, it was because she was afraid that she might hurt them. But, on second thought, and after a

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long examination of conscience, she considered that perhaps she might offer her last book, not to the believers and the faithful, but to those who, like herself, may at least for a time have doubted, lost courage and belief. She hoped that the book would urge them to gather their forces and resume the right way. Her own example proved that the Saviour was mindful of His creatures, even in their hour of battle, and would still guide their steps to salvation. She concluded, "My last word will be 'Magnificat.'"

Indeed, some of the poems express despair, discouragement, the obsession with coming death, and seem to receive no support, no relief, from religious faith; one or two of them go so far as to allude to the final victory of disbelief and evil. How far did this crisis go? The very innocence of Marie Noël leads us to think that there was not much in it. But we know a better judge. The Church, which so far had considered Marie Noël as a great poet of our faith, was greatly at a loss to pass judgment on the book and even thought of condemning it. It is rumored among Marie Noël's friends that finally the Holy Father, himself, read the book and saw no harm in it. He even added that there could hardly be found a more sincere creature and innocent soul, and he sent her a very special blessing.

From a purely literary standpoint, some readers consider that she now has a tendency to repeat herself and to lack the freshness of her first poems. A number of them are still worthy of our admiration, although her crisis has not prompted her with the same heartfelt accents which filled her preceding poems. She fails us a little when attempting to picture doubt and evil. Her verse sounds rather anxious to produce an effect deliberately, instead of springing forth readily, as it did when she conveyed her youthful emotions. The manner of the poem confirms what we thought of the matter—sin and evil are not in her.

Such is that highly delightful and attractive soul whose poetry has allied deep religious faith to playful humor. The one who as a young girl was an admirer of Pascal and La Fontaine has been faithful to her literary masters. Neither illusive or lost in mystical contemplation, nor sarcastic or biting, she just gives us that natural joy, that exhilaration, that sunshine of the soul to which faith and confidence are natural. They are in her. She gives us the simple mirth which results from her love of everything—the love she grants to the new springing grass or to the old woman overwhelmed with work. And she is so unassuming, so modest, that she is like a companion who never intrudes and whom we miss when he is not with us, whose sincerity and innocence are always present. To use the words of Lucien Descaves, "Even though we had never heard it, we could recognize her voice in the choir of the faithful; it is the voice of a child." It also is the voice of true poetic expression, Christian love, and humility. "Ecce Ancilla Domini."

Catholic Post-War Poetry in Germany

BY CHRISTIAN SCHNELLER

CATHOLIC post-war poetry in Germany—the very attempt to define the terms poses difficult questions and evokes Faust's famous *Hier stock' ich schon* (and here, I hesitate already). What is "Catholic" in Germany's post-war poetry, and what is "post-war" poetry? If we limit the term "poetry" to the strict meaning "bound and rhythmical language," thus excluding the cultured prose style of Reinhold Schneider or Elisabeth Langgasser which is definitely part of German *Dichtung*, what criterion will make it "post-war" poetry? Is it the unmistakable stamp of post-war experience, the experience of soldiers and veterans, of refugees, of political and material suffering—or is it the year of publication?

And, last but not least, what is "Catholic" in German letters? The question is difficult to answer both historically and actually. Historically: centuries of regional safety have closely identified the human and cultural atmosphere of Bavaria and Austria, for instance, with the Catholic tradition, and even an obviously non-Christian poet like Carossa or Kolbenheyer, are more "Catholic" in this sense than many Christians from Protestant communities; nevertheless, it is quite clear that we have to exclude them from this context. Actually: the experiences of the recent past have fostered a keen sense of Christian responsibility, but this new consciousness is so fundamental that it has obliterated many of the old distinguishing criteria of "confession" in poetic Christian utterance. Thus, for example, the work of Rudolf Alexander Schroeder, the Lutheran pastor, has definitely Catholic traits in a fundamental sense; his translation of T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* was widely hailed in Catholic circles, not only for its mastery of language trained in excellent previous Shakespeare translations, but also for its common Christian importance. Even if we assume the most individual definition of Catholic poetry as the work of Catholic poets, we are confronted with a wide range of relevance and immediacy. It is the safest course, perhaps, to discuss some of these questions against the background of recent developments and literary tradition in Germany, and we may hope to clarify a few of the points mentioned.

First of all, the German *Dichtung* is by no means identical with the Anglo-French meaning of "letters" or *lettres*, and this is significant of a state of mind. It is not by chance that the romantic movement was strongest in Germany—the movement which emphasized the pre-eminent position of the poet as a seer and lonely bearer of tidings from "beyond." Never was he truly classic in the French

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meaning of the word, a representative of a class carrying the wealth of social ton and culture; impacts of evolutions and revolutions would be felt, but in a keenly personal sense; the effect could be transcended, leading the poet to universal *Wesensschau* (grasp of essentials), or, more often than not, would remain in a delicate atmosphere of individual joy and complaint. German letters interpret rarely; they have a language of their own. Attempts at social actualization, like those of the early Thomas Mann (*Magic Mountain*, *Buddenbrooks*) were isolated. So, the tanks would rumble past the flower-potted windows of the poet, and he would shudder and try to find solace in his own breast.

This situation is aggravated by the breathless speed of the political and social developments. When the Nazi Reich collapsed, it vanished not only *in re*, but in concept—it was wiped out as completely as some strange Asiatic civilization of the Middle Ages, and it is impossible, even for the die-hard nationalist, to attach any emotive meaning to all the strange gods, demons and hierarchies of the Twelve Years: the face of Hitler in a 1949 magazine is as unreal and as haunting to us as the face of Rameses II in a museum. This explains the complete collapse of "timely" poetry after 1945: the explanations of the recent past were as actual as the explanations of an archeological specialist about the social background of the Second Reign in the Nile Delta. Even a poem as good as Werner Bergengruen's *Dies Irae* treating the demoniacal aspects of the Hitler years in a very penetrating vision appears hollow and two dimensional to the post-war reader, and the emigrant literature as a whole, as an utterance of "emigration," vanished into utter irrelevancy.

There are several reactions possible to this state of affairs, and almost all of them took place; and all of them revealed their specific strength and shortcomings very quickly. There was the way into tradition, and there was the rebel cry against it; both ways are overcast all too heavily by the shadows of the Giants, and almost nobody was able to evade the tags of one epigonism or the other. The choice was not very wide: there are Rilke, George and Hoelderlin for the "traditionalist," and there are Bert Brecht and comrades for the "rebels," for the torch-bearers of the missing revolution. The latter way was, perhaps, the path of the more burning necessities and of a greater moral conviction, especially chosen by a bitterly antagonized younger set; aside from non-Christian groups, a cell of youthful leftists roughly corresponding to the French *Progressistes* and to the *Esprit* circle gathered around the weekly *Ende und Anfang* (now defunct) in Augsburg and fought for their cause in a strongly rhythmical, ragged and somber *Truemmerstil* (debris style). The most powerful document of this school, perhaps, is Theo Pirker's *Zehn Lieder von der Methode* written in 1946; but the literary importance of the movement is minor, and its emphasis is clearly socio-political.

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For the strictly poetic utterance, the most disquieting phenomenon is the crushing influence of the Great Names mentioned above. Perhaps it is not exaggerated to venture that, from now on, German lyrical poetry will have to proceed by leaps and bounds; only titans of language could dare break the magic circle of names like Hoelderlin, the Romantics and, above all, Rainer Maria Rilke, and mere "talents" will have to wither in their shadows. In Christian and Catholic letters, the best stand against this situation is made by the venerable survivors who flourished before the war and were able to add to their fame: Gertrud von le Fort, Oda Schaefer, Ruth Schaumann, Ida Friederike Goerres, to mention the representatives of the remarkably strong female element in the literary body; then Werner Bergengruen, the convert from the Baltics (see above). But one is reluctant, somehow, to classify them under the heading of this report, as their work is not too strongly influenced by recent happenings. This is even true of Reinhold Schneider, whose almost indisputable eminence, enormous volume of work, and deep theological insight make him the leader of German Catholic letters today.

And the "post-war generation"? Its situation is desperate. The breach of continuity, the heavy material demands of the ragged and hungry years and, most deadly of all, the depletion in numbers and leadership are obstacles almost too great to overcome. Here, in this generation, epigonism is felt most heavily, and either the utter sincerity necessary for the expression of extreme experiences or the formal control of the medium is lacking. Hans von Savigny's *Elegie der getrosten Verzweiflung* (Elegy of Contented Despair) reflects Hoelderlin's influence and is too formal to bridge the Christian antithesis indicated in the title; many of the refugee poets, true as their experience may be, are entangled in the medium of romantic simplicity so alluring for their particular destiny of utter poverty and resignation. It is just, perhaps, to emphasize a few names: there is Konrad Weiss, hailed in the prominent literary review *Hochland* as one of the most prominent and promising members of the younger generation; his collection bears the significant name *In exitu*, and his combination of manly force and chaste control, of natural keenness of insight and Christian awareness will make him one of the small number whose appreciation by the public will begin much later than in his lifetime. Remarkable, too, although definitely Rilkean in diction, is Hans Egon Holthusen's *Trilogie des Krieges* (Trilogy of the War); passages like the following will speak for themselves:

Endlich besiegt sein und nichts mehr festhalten muessen . . .
. . . Endlich aus aller Knechtschaft entrueckt sein, gefangen und
dennoch
Frei wie niemals zuvor. Dies ist die Freiheit der Kinder
Gottes. Dies ist die Heimkehr. Dies gilt. O zarte, o himmlische
Armut der letzten Soldaten . . .

(To be defeated, finally, and not to be forced to retain anything . . .
. . . Removed, finally, from all serfdom, captured and nevertheless
/Free as never before. This is the freedom of the children/of God.
This is the homecoming. This counts. O tender, O heavenly/Misery
of the last soldiers . . .)

Thus the concluding lines of the trilogy—our guilt, our misery and our highest hope toward the final redemption. The times are not favorable to literary concentration in Germany today—it is too early to expect essential utterances about a destiny so vast, so all-embracing and all-destructive, but all-merciful too, as these last years have offered to the "Nation of day-before-yesterday and day-after-tomorrow" (Nietzsche)—but who sees the end of the tide running swifter and swifter? Perhaps, the faces of men will turn altogether from the elegant provisory of literature, and more and more we will have to behold in great anxiety and hope the clouds of thunder hanging in the Heavens. We do not know whether their fury announces the promised Second Coming.

The Catholic Revival in South America

BY ELIZABETH L. ETNIRE

IN regard to the revival of Catholic literature in South America, the average layman is inclined to say, "The majority of Latin Americans are Catholics. Is it not logical, therefore, to assume that their literature is, of a consequence, Catholic? Hence, why the need for a revival at all?"

A glance at the early history of South American literature would seem to suggest a similar reaction. Christian literature in the New World began as early as 1539, with Bishop Zumarraga's *Doctrina breve*, an outline of Christianity. About three-quarters of the early writers were ecclesiastics, writing catechisms and books of elementary religious instruction, as well as grammars and dictionaries.

We may recall that while the Spanish conquistadors and the adventurers who followed them had little leisure for literature, they were accompanied by priests, men of letters and science who served as missionaries to implant culture and the Faith in the New World. Throughout the whole of the Colonial Period, Catholic literature was predominant. The story of the conquest, settlement and conversion to Christianity of the New World was written in minute detail by the colonists. Chile led in this historical writing. The *Conquista y población del Perú* by the Chilean, Cristobal de Molina in the sixteenth century, was the first

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account by an American-born writer. In the seventeenth appeared the *Histórica relación del reino de Chile y de las misiones de la Compañía de Jesús* by the Jesuit, Father Ovalle. Another Jesuit, Father Rosales, wrote *Historia general del reino de Chile*. In Chile, "We may say without exaggeration that but for the Church, there would have been no cultural life at all. Every name that can be cited in connection with higher pursuits designates either an ecclesiastic or a person trained by ecclesiastics." (Edwin Ryan, *The Catholic Historical Review*, Oct. 1941, p. 325).

Argentina, too, had its historians. One of the best was Pedro Lozano, S.J., who wrote at the end of the seventeenth century. In Argentina alone there were some two hundred Jesuits who published works.

Everywhere in South America during this period the Augustinians, Franciscans, Dominicans, Jesuits and the clergy were active in fostering and producing literature. W. A. Hurst in the *Dublin Review* of 1933 states that "under Spanish rule, all the learning of literature was due to the encouragement and examples of the government and the Church." The greatest agency that the Spanish and Portuguese had at their disposal was the Church. Both countries were at the height of the Renaissance during the early Colonial Period in South America, and they transplanted its finest expression as directed by Catholic thought to the New World.

It should not be said that during the eighteenth century there was a slackening in the production of literature. Centers of literary activity had been created in Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, and Venezuela. The Franciscan poet, Manuel de Navarrete, is prominent among his contemporaries; numerous versified lives of various saints were published. The best poetry of the century was collected by the priest Juan Velasco. But the spirit of the century, in America as well as in Europe, was prosaic rather than poetic; it was the spirit of the age of reason. There was a tendency to make cultural universality independent of all religious conception with the intent of actually destroying religion, not merely substituting something for it.

During the Period of Independence in South America, a very large proportion of literature was taken up with patriotic and national subjects. Much of this was mediocre in quality, but there were many authors of worth; we need but mention names such as Esteban Echevarria, José Hernández, Alejandro Magareños. It is, of course, well known that the revolutions that prevailed during this period had as their original aim freedom from the yoke of Spain and the establishment of independent national governments. Unfortunately this desire for freedom did not confine itself to attacks on political institutions and affiliations alone but tended to assail *all* established institutions including the Church itself. Thus it was that following this period, literature began to flow in two

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different channels: one revolutionary, anticlerical, "liberal;" the other conservative, traditional, Catholic.

It cannot be said that in the literature of South America during the past century there was much that can be called specifically Catholic. The Peruvian, Dr. Victor Belaunde, writing for *The Monitor* of June 9, 1945, characterizes this century by saying:

In the course of the 19th century, the culture inspired by a spiritualistic metaphysics, although secular, is replete with positivistic and utilitarian scientism, based on the primacy of economics and on the false supposition that order could be found in this sphere, with a total disregard for any transcendent ethical juridical norm. The primacy of faith was replaced by the primacy of economy. Human culture is no longer presented as the derivation of a spiritual principle, but as the rationalization of the economic structure. Positivism and its twin, materialism, were substituted for the Illuminism of the 18th century.

Since the Period of Independence, the history of the South American countries has been, generally speaking, one of strife and uncertainty. The effects of the conflict of Church and State as contributors to the decline of Catholic culture in general need no elaboration. Until recent years the cultural links of South America have been with Europe rather than with the United States. The country was actually affected by the rationalism promulgated during the French Revolutionary era by Voltaire, Rousseau, and imported to the New World by Spanish officials and soldiers, and by South Americans educated in France. Freemasonry, another troublesome element, was introduced from the United States as well as from Europe. It has continued to play an important part in the politics of Latin America. As a result of these influences, as well as those mentioned above, a considerable decadence of Catholic culture has resulted. In general, religion does not flourish where political and civil strife is the rule rather than the exception. With the political status in constant turmoil, literature, which is largely the reflection of society, was likewise in a state of confusion and impending decadence.

It is from this apparent state of literary decadence that Catholic literature is attempting to rise. As to what, exactly, instigated this revival, there are various theories: some assert that it is merely the beginning of a new "cycle"—a natural phenomenon; others interpret it as a natural tendency of a group to rise to defense when attacked by a contrasting force. Be it as it may, there has been in the twentieth century a rebirth or revival of creative Catholic thinking as exemplified in literature and education and in the Catholic Action movement.

Let us glance briefly at the state of Catholic letters in the various individual Latin countries. Argentina is, in culture and civilization, uniquely European. Of its literature we may say that a great proportion of it is taken up with political events and personages. That is a remark that may apply to the

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literature of the Latin countries in general. Much of its literature is, also, imitative and echoes the literary fashions of Europe—of France in particular. It cannot be said that in the Argentine *belles lettres* of the eighteenth century there was much that was specifically Catholic. It is otherwise with the twentieth century and especially with contemporary literature. Writing in the *Revista Javeriana* of Bogota, Father Luis Gorosito Heredia says that in Argentina, Catholic writers are numerous and distinguished. He mentions Catholic thinkers such as Msgr. Franceschi, Msgr. Napal, Msgr. Miguel de Andrea, Leonardo Castellani, and Msgr. Calcagno. There are also numerous good Catholic novelists such as Moreno and Pearson. One in particular, Hugo Wast, whose real name is Gustavo Adolfo Martínez Zuviria, is well known abroad. His novels *Stone Desert* and *Peach Blossom* have been translated into English. His latest publication, *Esperar contra toda esperanza* and *Aventuras del Padre Vespignani*, in two volumes (*Su segunda patria* and *Alma romana*), has just been released. Manuel Galvez, another novelist, says that "En definitiva, la literatura católica cuenta en Buenos Aires con la adhesión de los escritores menores de 35 años, entre los mejor dotados, literariamente." The foundation of the Institute of Catholic Culture has provided a form of religious revival for Argentine youth. Msgr. Franceschi, author of *La angustia contemporánea* and *Totalitarismos* (1946), through his magazine *Criterio*, gathers together a nucleus of Catholic young people well prepared for "las cruzadas de la fe." Another Argentine philosopher worthy of mention is Octavio N. Dersi, author of *El llamado al sacerdocio* and *Fundamentos metafísicos de la orden moral*.

Romulo Carbia (died 1945), former professor at the Universities of La Plata and of Buenos Aires, Argentine scholar in history, published in 1944 his *Historia de la leyenda negra hispanoamericana*. The black legend refers to the systematic campaign of the Spaniards to loot America. The historical competence of Carbia is clearly evident. His *La revolución de mayo y la iglesia*, published in 1945, is an excellent historical contribution to the study of the "cuestión patronato nacional."

Another Argentine, Virgilio Filippo, published in 1945 a work entitled *Democracia sana y democracia falaz*, which is accompanied by a message of Pope Pius XII on a fuller and better democracy. Pedro Henriquez Urena, professor of the University of Buenos Aires, is also worthy of mention among contemporary Argentine Catholic writers; his *Literary Currents in Hispanic America* was published in 1945. One of the best known Catholic writers in the Argentine today is Monseñor Miguel de Andrea, who has published *El Evangelio y la actualidad* and *Hacia un mundo nuevo*.

The prominence of Uruguayan literature is often overlooked because of the fact that Uruguayan authors of note are frequently confused with Argentine writers, due to the fact that they so often cross over to Buenos Aires where

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they live and publish. In Uruguay the "patriarca del catolicismo oriental," Zorrilla de San Martín, has had successors in the talented jurist and lawyer, Seco Illa, and the distinguished writer Hugo Antuña, as well as the orator, Dardo Ragules. Also worthy of mention is Juana de Ibarbourou, poetess, who finds her inspiration in the Faith.

The literary production of Chile differs from that of the rest of South America, for while it has produced an excellent poet in Gabriela Mistral, considered the greatest Chilean poet, it is otherwise relatively undistinguished in poetry but rich in scientific and historical works. Of Catholic literature in the full sense of the word there has been little. The Catholic Universities of Santiago and Valparaíso and the founding of *La Revista Católica* have done much to restore the intellectual influence of Catholicism. One author should be mentioned as contributing to the revival of Catholic literature in Chile: Carlos Hamilton Bethania, who recently published his *Transparencias evangélicas* and *Salvador Palma*.

The literature of Brazil has in the past generally followed closely the literary fashions of Europe, with Catholic literature as such being rather secondary. In the past few years there has been a noticeable revival, however; this revival was initiated by Jakson Figueredo, author of *Pascal y la inquietud contemporánea*. Directly following him is Tristán de Athayde, called the first critic of his country, who combines his philosophic talent, his encyclopedic knowledge, and his apostolic zeal to write such works as *El hombre moderno y el hombre eterno*, *Las edades del hombre*, and *Mitos de nuestro tiempo*. Father Leonel Franca, author of *El divorcio* and *La psicología de la Fe*, should also be mentioned, as well as Erico Verissimo, author of the psychological novel *Consider the Lilies of the Field* (1947). This work offers an excellent study in Brazilian society.

Because of frequent revolutions and political strife, Catholic literature in Bolivia has had little chance to develop. One might say that its literature, generally speaking, has been either anticlerical or tearful romanticism. This latter quality is possibly due to the fact that approximately eighty-seven per cent of the entire population of Bolivia is Indian; the Indians are a melancholy and emotional people, and their influence on the country's literature is inevitable. From the point of view of Catholic literature, there is not much of interest, although there are some signs of a revival. The historian, Luis Paz, and the journalist, Abel Iturralde, have consistently defended the Faith in their writings.

The literature of Venezuela developed rather tardily, and although there has been a copious output on the part of the writers, it is, generally speaking, mainly of local interest, such as descriptions of the Venezuelan landscape, celebrations of national patriots, revolutions, and the like.

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Colombia formed the one exception to the general absence of Catholic literature in South America during the nineteenth century. In spite of the fact that it has had its full share of political disturbances, Catholic literature has flourished on the whole. Dr. Belaunde says of Colombian Catholic literature:

Colombia se ha caracterizado por el acentrado catolicismo de sus intelectuales y de sus masas. La vieja lucha entre conservadores y liberales, sirvió para destacar, con todo vigor, el relieve de los intelectuales católicos. Las mas altas figuras de la intelectualidad colombiana fueron de una "ortodoxia" irreprochable y contribuyeron, con sus brillantes escritos, a la defensa del catolicismo. Tales fueron José J. Ortiz, Rufino Cuervo, Miguel Antonio Caro, Carlos Holguín y Marco Fidel Suárez, autor de la magnífica *Oración a Jesucristo*, y Hernando Holguín y Caro. En las filas liberales se produjeron las resonantes conversiones del poeta Pombo, del polígrafo I.M. Samper y de Rafael Núñez, salvador de la unidad de su patria. El catolicismo ha continuado dominando la inteligencia colombiana, en todas sus manifestaciones. A pesar de cierta influencia pagana, el gran poeta de *Ritos*, Guillermo Velencia, tiene del catolicismo la visión ecuménica y el sentido litúrgico. Gómez Restrepo, Joaquín Casas y el Padre Feliz Restrepo, continúan la obra de Caro y de Suárez. La elocuencia sagrada, que ilustraron Cortes Lee, autor del hermoso libro *Homenaje a Jesucristo*, y Carrasquilla, tiene hoy cultivadores salientes. Vicente Castro Silva y Alvaro Sánchez, el aplaudido autor de *Meditaciones eucarísticas*, Mariano Carbajal, Ricardo Nieto y Antonio Llano, mantienen la unión de la poesía religiosa.

Another Colombian writer, described as, "un escritor netamente católico," is Alfonso Junco. Although born in Colombia, he lives and works in Mexico and is a member of the Mexican Academy. Well known among his works are *Florilegio eucarístico* and *La divina aventura*. One of his most recent books, published during the past year, is *Inquisición sobre la inquisición*. The son of the former President Dr. José Vicente Concha, Luis Concha Cordoba, is also prominent among Colombian Catholic writers. He is sometimes referred to as a "new paladin of Catholicism." Although there are anti-Catholic elements in Colombia today, Catholic literature on the whole is holding its own well.

Ecuador produced one man known to Catholics the world over, Gabriel García Moreno. He was primarily a statesman, serving fourteen years as president, but also wrote in defense of the Church and the religious orders. In the past, Catholic literature in Ecuador has had rather slight interest, but during the past few years there have been definite signs of a revival. In the opinion of Father Aurelio Espinosa Pólit, S.J., Rector of the Catholic University of Quito, the most outstanding figure in Catholic literature in Ecuador is Julio Tobar Donoso, whose book, *Estudios sobre los límites Peruano-Ecuadorianos*, was published in 1947. In 1945 he published another work of the same general character, *La invasión peruana y el protocolo de rio*. In a conversation with

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Father Espinosa last June, he mentioned four other writers who, during the past few years, have contributed generously to the revival of Catholic literature in Ecuador. The first of these is Wilfrido Loor, who, in 1947, published his *El y Alfaro* in three volumes. This is the biography of the famous liberal president of Ecuador, studied from the Catholic viewpoint. Another of his works, also of historical nature, is *La vida del Padre Julio M. Matovelle*.

The second writer mentioned by Father Espinosa is Jacinto Jijón y Caamaño, who wrote *Política conservadora*. The most interesting of his works is one which he is now in the process of publishing. It is entitled *El Ecuador interandino y occidental*, in seven volumes. The fourth volume was published in 1947. It is a work, in the opinion of Father Espinosa, that only two or three persons in the world will be able to judge, and may be called a "rebuilding" or "restoration" of the countless Indian languages found in South America prior to the Colonial Period.

Also mentioned by Father Espinosa is the critic, Gabriel Ceballos Garcia. Two of his better known works are *Apuntes de filosofía del derecho* (1932) and *Caminos de España* (1947), which is a critical literary study of Calderón de la Barca, Baltazar Gracián, and Cervantes. The last writer mentioned by Father Espinosa is the poet, Carlos Suárez Veintimilla, who, in Father's opinion, is the "más delicado, el mejor, quizás, de los contemporáneos." His *Cuadernos de ausencia y de presencia* (1945) are sweet, delicate verses. His works to date consist of this book and two other volumes entitled, *Caminos del corazón inquieto* and *Alondras*.

In my opinion, Father Espinosa himself should be included among contemporary Catholic writers in Ecuador. Master of Latin, Greek and French, he has studied in Belgium and at Cambridge. One of his most interesting works is a study of "The Hound of Heaven" (*El lebré del cielo de Francis Thompson*), published in 1948. In addition to biographical material on Thompson, the book contains numerous translations of the poem (including one translation into Latin, written in "estrofas alcaicas"), as well as excellent commentaries. "The Hound of Heaven" has long been regarded as untranslatable, and Father's translation contains much of the same poetic beauty as does the English version. In 1946 he published his *Dieciocho clases de literatura*, which is a series of lectures for professors of literature. Another work, *Coloquios con Jesús en el Santísimo Sacramento*, a series of prayers and meditations, was first published in 1936. Such was the demand for the book that there have been two additional editions, the latest appearing in 1947. In the same year he also printed his *La dicha que vivimos*, which is a study of religious vocations. In 1946 he published *La fuente intermitente*. Probably his most important work, one to which he has dedicated the major part of his life, is *Virgilio: el poeta y su misión providencial*. It was published in 1932. The study of Vergil has

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been his "specialty" and he possesses a rich library containing nearly all the books that have been written about him in a multitude of languages.

Although Peruvian literature in the past has not been of particular interest from the Catholic viewpoint, there are definite signs of a revival today. This is due largely to the efforts of Dr. Victor Belaunde who has great faith in the cultural power of Catholicism in Peru. Addressing a convention of Catholic youth leaders under the auspices of the Peruvian National Catholic Youth Council on March 8, 1943, he stated that the present mission of youth is to sow the ideas that Peruvian culture is indissolubly united with Catholicism; that the flowering of this seed will determine a brilliant renaissance of Peruvian culture in all orders. In his opinion, "in Peruvian culture Christianity is the great animating force and the bond of greater cohesion; religion is the generating force of culture . . . without religion culture would disappear; the relation of religion to culture has its full confirmation in Peru." One of Dr. Belaunde's most interesting publications is *La conferencia de San Francisco* (1945), in which he presents both the Catholic and Latin American points of view in his analysis of the proceedings and the results achieved in the Conference. Of great interest, also, is his book, *El Cristo de la fe y los Cristos literarios*. It was published in the series, Biblioteca Christus, started in 1936, which propose to be edited "so that the public culture of Peru will be drawn to the glorious figure of Christ." Other works that should be mentioned are his *Meditaciones peruanas*, *El debate constitucional*, *Bolívar and the Political Thought of the Spanish American Revolutions*.

In regard to contemporary Catholic writers in Peru, Dr. Belaunde considers the following among the best: José de la Riva Agüero (*Carácter de la literatura en el Perú independiente*, *La historia en el Perú*, *Por la verdad, la tradición y la patria*, *La civilización peruana*); José Jiménez Borja, Dean of the Facultad de Letras of the University of San Marcos during 1948 (*Historia literaria; Cien años de literatura*); Mercedes Gallagher de Parks (*La realidad y el arte*); Paul Ferrero Rebaglisti (*Ideario social católico, Marxismo y nacionalismo*); Mariano Iberico Rodríguez (*Una filosofía estética, El sentimiento de la vida cósmica*); and Honorio Delgado (*La formación espiritual del individuo*).

This very brief survey of Catholic writers in the different South American countries may leave the impression that the revival of Catholic literature there is making steady progress. But actually the situation is not so optimistic as it seems. Last spring the proprietor of one of the leading bookstores in Quito, Ecuador, was asked his opinion concerning Catholic literature and the reading public in South America. His answer was indeed depressing. Originally he had stocked his shelves primarily with Catholic books, with the intention of making his bookstore an essentially Catholic one; within a very short time, he said, he was forced to remove the Catholic books and replace them with

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others; aside from a few purchases made by priests and other religious, there had been no call for them. A similar situation can be noted in Lima and Buenos Aires. Both cities have bookstores in nearly every block of the downtown district, but Catholic books as such are in the minority. Last May, Father Espinosa and Dr. Matilde Pérez Palacios (Chairman of the Department of Journalism at the Catholic University of Lima, and a person very well informed on current Latin literary trends) were asked their opinion on the following question: "Is the revival of Catholic literature in South America today making progress, or is the influence of Liberalism and Freemasonry overshadowing it?" Both answered that, without question, the latter was true.

An atmosphere of revolution has prevailed in South America for many years, and it is extremely difficult for Catholic literature to flourish in such a temper. It is to be hoped that when peace and political stability have been achieved, the efforts of the many Catholic writers in South America today will be rewarded and that Catholic literature will once again enjoy the prestige it had in former years.

Letter from Rome

August 1949

THIS hot and beautiful Italian summer of 1949 may well be remembered in future years, as the "dress rehearsal" for the Holy Year. For the first time since the end of the war tourists are flocking in by the thousands from all over the world to witness the miracle of reborn Italy, of this extraordinary land where the very scars of war seem to be alive with a new sort of beauty. These post-war tourists bear only the slightest resemblance to the wealthy and extravagant *forestieri* of the 'thirties and seem to come to Italy far more out of a feeling of love than out of a spirit of curiosity. The Italians have not been long in understanding and welcoming this new kind of tourism and the pilgrimage of love has now been on for several months.

Constant references to the Holy Year, to an improved touristic organization that is to be ready by next year, are to be found in the Italian press. Many books on the history of the Holy Years have recently been published; a new book on Saint Augustine by Prof. Michele Federico Sciacca is an important addition to the study of the life and the works of this great saint; the beautiful one thousand page volume of the new addition of the *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, has just come out.

The outstanding Catholic writer in Italy today undoubtedly is Giovanni Papini. Papini, who was born in 1881, started writing in 1903 and contributed to most of the important journals of the time. His early period, characterized

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by his discovery of the "divine freedom of the *ego*" and by his immense desire for culture, was followed, after World War I, by his widely publicized conversion to Catholicism and by his famous book *Storia di Cristo*.

Papini's name has appeared frequently in the press in recent months in connection with his candidacy for the Nobel Prize. The other Italian candidate is Maria Montessori, world famous founder of the pedagogical method that bears her name. Supporters of Papini's candidacy point to his immense production, to his world-wide fame and to the fact that his works have been awaiting recognition for years. Signora Montessori's supporters, on the other hand (and they are many, as can be proved by the International Montessori Convention that has just closed in the city of San Remo), simply say that if anyone is likely to contribute anything constructive towards peace in future years she is the one; for her "Science for Peace," which according to her methods should be taught even to the smallest child, is the best possible guarantee against the outbreak of new wars.

Two other authors, Nino Salveschi and Nicola Lici, often write deeply Christian works. Salveschi, whose latest work is *Trittico d'amore* expresses his philosophy in short maxims or sentences that invite the reader to a more optimistic and hopeful vision of life. Lici, who belonged to the group of Catholic writers such as Giuliotti, Bargellini and also Papini, who was a contributor to the *Frontespizio*, one of the outstanding Italian Catholic journals of our times, is almost a neo-primitivist writer whose greatest charm lies in his great purity of form and content.

One book published last year, *Fuga dal tempo* (*Flight from Time*), created a minor sensation that has not quite died out yet. The autobiographical plot relates the experiences which the author, Alberto de'Stefani, underwent from September 1943 to June 1944. De'Stefani was a rather well known economist at the time of the Fascist regime; during the Italian civil war he was obliged to hide and seek refuge in different parts of Italy, in monasteries and peasants' houses, among priests and villagers. Out of his complete loneliness, out of his feeling of being cut off from the society of his fellow men, the author finds again the eternal laws of love and faith. Having transcended all material feelings and events, de'Stefani dreads only the moment in which, after having been "liberated," he will have to face them again.

Whatever judgment one wishes to pass upon the author's personality and political background, one cannot help feeling that his words have a true ring and that he has succeeded in expressing through his own experience the experience of many people whose lives were in those days in constant danger and whose Christian faith gave them fresh hope.

Riccardo Bacchelli's latest book is *Lo Sguardo di Gesù* (*The Glimpse of Jesus*). Bacchelli is one of the greatest living Italian writers; born in 1891,

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he wrote for many Italian reviews, published poetry, and is generally considered as the master of the modern Italian historical novel. His strongest novel *Il Mulino del Po* (*The Mill on the Po*), evoking the last hundred years of Italian history, has just been made into a moving picture and has met with a very favorable reception at the International Cinema Festival that is taking place in Venice just now. *Lo Sguardo di Gesù* is a minor work in scope but one in which Bacchelli's ornate, oratorical, and pictorial prose appears in all its might.

One name, that of Clemente Rebora, holds a particular interest for anyone who wants to be acquainted with Italian contemporary religious poetry. His poems, written between 1913 and 1947, after having been half forgotten for many years, have recently excited new interest among literary critics and have been collected in one volume. This collection is particularly valuable because it shows the development of Rebora's lyrical inspiration, which, starting from the youthful enthusiasm and the "eroico furore" of the secular verses (*Frammenti Lirici*) ends in the divine love of the *Poesie Religiose*, and it shows also the continuity that exists throughout his lyrical experience.

Perhaps the greatest literary surprise of the summer has been provided by the awarding of the Premio Viareggio. The Viareggio Prize is the greatest, if not the oldest, of all Italian literary prizes and shows a sense of tradition and a seriousness of purpose that few of the other hundred younger awards can boast of. Every year for the past twenty years, during the early part of August, a jury made up of the outstanding Italian artistic and scholarly personalities gathers in the modern and swanky beach resort of Viareggio and rewards with a tidy sum of money the best novel or short story collection of the year.

It is no secret that ever since the end of the war the jury in its majority has shown a definite penchant towards very liberal if not leftist-minded authors. The choice this year seemed particularly hard to make: it was well known that the latest works of two of the best Italian left-wing writers, Elio Vittorini and Vasco Pratolini, had been great disappointments to the public and that the jury had great difficulty in agreeing on any of the other authors. However, not many people were prepared for the announcement that was made by the president of the jury to the elegant and gay crowds of the Viareggio Casino on the night of August 20: the Viareggio Prize was not awarded to any of the young hopeful novelists but to sixty year old Professor Arturo Carlo Jemolo, author of the four hundred page historical essay *Chiesa e Stato in Italia Negli Ultimi Cento Anni* (*Church and State in Italy during the Last Hundred Years*). He is a devout Catholic and an outstanding liberal, one of the leading authorities on ecclesiastical and theological law, which he teaches at the University of Rome.

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Even though the choice of *Chiesa e Stato* was obviously a compromise aimed at not antagonizing anybody, it turned out to be a remarkably successful one: liberals in the country were happy to hear that their hopes had not been betrayed by the Viareggio Prize Jury, while all good Catholics felt rightly proud that such a worthy and sincere Christian, such an authority on Church history as Professor Jemolo had been thus honored. In short, the choice ended by pleasing everybody except the writers and the literary critics. But that, after all, was to be expected.

—ANGELA BIANCHINI FALES

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Book Reviews

New Irish Poets. Edited by Devin A. Garrity. Devin-Adair. \$3.50.

From the end of the 1920's, when Lennox Robinson brought out his *Golden Treasury of Irish Verse*, until well into the 1940's no anthology of Irish poetry in English was published. Consider for a moment what that fact suggests about the conditions in which Irish poetry is written and published: it tells you almost of itself that the verse literature of Ireland maintains itself against the most desperate social and economic handicaps. I had two personal experiences of the difficulty of finding publishers for Irish anthologies, and in both instances the publishers approached were keenly sympathetic to Irish literature. That is why Irish poets drew long breaths of relief when, about 1944, the anthologies began to come out again. Since 1944 we have had, from Irish, English and American houses, about seven or eight volumes, and one or two more are announced. To American and British poets this would be a frighteningly small amount of anthologizing, but to us in Ireland it represents that minimum of continuing recognition which is all we habitually receive—apart from the books we send out as individual poets, and the space allotted to us in anthologies which are not confined to our verse.

It will be clear that, whatever faults may be found (and some have been found) with the present anthology, and with the previous Devin-Adair publication, *A Thousand Years of Irish Poetry*, the fact of their publication is salutary and their publishers and editors are worthy of the thanks of all to whom Irish literature is important. Many of the poets included in the present volume are young men and women: may a poet whose first twelve years of publication coincided with the barren time point out to his juniors that they especially have something to be thankful for?

I suppose there are only two things which one may legitimately require of an anthologist, waiving most differences of taste; and these are first, that his aim or principle of selection shall be clear to himself and faithfully adhered to, and second, that the verse which he prints shall be poetry. All anthologists necessarily attempt to fulfil the second requirement, but many fail to see that the first *is* a requirement at all.

I believe Mr. Garrity knew what he was aiming at. He wanted to offer numerous and varied samples of the verse written by living Irish poets who are not already known to American readers of poetry. The qualification that they should be living poets excluded Yeats, A. E., Synge, Katharine Tynan, Douglas Hyde and others; while the second qualification excluded some ten poets who, as Mr. Garrity says in his "Editor's Note," could not be omitted from a thoroughly comprehensive anthology. Since I myself am one of those whom Mr. Garrity omits (for a reason with which I have no quarrel) I should like to remark that his list of already-known poets, while including myself, fails to mention some of my seniors *e.g.* Seumas O'Sullivan, Pádraic Colum and James Stephens, and that the American reader should remember the omissions when he looks in this book to see what has happened in post-Yeatsian Ireland.

If the American reader does remember this intentional narrowing of the field he will find here, on the whole, reasonable material for his judgment. He will have access to poems by thirty-seven men and women—about one hundred and ninety pieces—and a reasonable idea may come to him of the verse we now write.

He may be puzzled by the ages of the poets. Expecting that less-known poets should be mostly in their twenties or early thirties (as they would be if the "new

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poets" were Americans) he will be surprised to find nearly half of them fortyish or fiftyish. He may be surprised again to find that many of them have published no books or only one book each. But again he must remember the near-impossibility of getting books of verse published from Ireland and the intentional omissions.

When he gets over his puzzlement he will certainly find good poetry here. The *quantity* of the good poetry I will not attempt to measure precisely, but it is in my opinion sufficient to give him the worth of his money.

The reader will, for instance, read five lyrics by Austin Clarke, who is likely to prove one of the most unusual poets the Irish have ever produced. Mr. Clarke enjoys considerable respect and authority at home, both for his high gifts and for his religious devotion to the art of poetry, and, whatever difficulty his verse offers, it more than compensates by its richness, its music, its nativeness and its remarkable freedom (in its greater part) from influence by other poets. He is in his early fifties and has published over a dozen books but has received so little attention, in comparison with his achievement, that Mr. Garrity did well to include him among his "new poets." He should, however, have represented Mr. Clarke's epic and dramatic verse as well as his lyrics, and he certainly should have given him at least three times the space. Five pages for Mr. Clarke, compared with five, six, seven and eight for poets with not half his output, achievement or reputation is too small a holding.

Associated with Clarke by his cultivation of Gaelic and other traditional material is Pádraic Fallon, a poet from the country of Raftery who writes better than that predecessor. Listen:

In the low house, whose thick lights
Labour'd each day to take true casts
of her
Brown face with its thin high bones,
she washed before the fire
Like a queen inside a penny:

And there as she did her hair in an
old green glass
The room bloomed and was stirred so
delicately
That the dead in their photographs
seemed coming alive
In their stiff Sunday finery
And flushed old masks of paper and
acid where time
Decayed by sad shades in Purgatory.

And there, as she stepped from one
dress into another
In the tremors and rays of
A reverie as quietly electric as the
Great Emperor Moth's,
One feared that the men for miles
Would arrive with beating hands at
the little window
Out of the stirring countryside;
But nothing happened; demurely she
steps out with
A maid's mouth and a maid's eyes
Past hens asleep in their wings and a
sow in a fat grunt
And cycles off into the skies.

That is the beginning of a lovely musing poem.

The traditional and Gaelic notes will be found in other poets here—in Donagh MacDonagh, in Patrick MacDonogh, and in others; but they are not the only notes, and, when they occur in some of the newcomers, they are not sounded in the same way. John Hewitt, a Belfastman, is acutely conscious of the differences between his people and those of the Catholic Republic; and he makes these differences the topics of many of his lyrics. He is intensely Irish, for all that, and adds valuable perceptions and statements to the sum. If he has any obvious limitations it is one uncommon in Irish writers, a suspicion of spontaneity and deliverance of self. He has taken Robert Frost as one of his models, because New England dryness, shrewdness and carefulness correspond to the nature of the Ulsterman. The spontaneous upsurge of feeling comes upon him at times, however, for all his watchfulness:

Let but a thrush begin
or colour catch my eye,
maybe a spring-woke whin
under a reeling sky,

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and all at once I lose
mortality's despair,
having so much to choose
out of the teeming air.

As a contrast, in some ways, to this Northerner is another Belfastman, Maurice James Craig, who, while retaining certain traits of the Ulster Protestant in his writing, is much less wholehearted a regionalist than Mr. Hewitt. This is partly because he is more intent on the private than on the communal life; and partly because he prefers Dublin as a place and the eighteenth century as a time to Belfast or Ulster of the twentieth century. His value to the common effort in Ireland is his strict and successful discipline in verse. There are no loose ends, no sprawlings, no dissonances in such writing as this:

A peacock in Leucadia loved a maid;
And through a deep aquarium of shade
They wandered side by side,
For ilex there and oleander wove
Their cool defences for the sacred
grove.

His fan, the peacock's pride,
Reformed in shadow for her gentle
eyes
The harsh lights of the waters and
the skies.

But when death took the maid
And empty desolation swept those
lawns,
The colours of a million dusks and
dawns

Lay low where she was laid.

These remarks and quotations suggest that there is a proper variety among these poets. The women poets—Rhoda Coghill, Blánaid Salkeld and others (two of whom, by the way, have slender claims to be called Irish)—increase the variety produced by Corkman, Dubliner, Galwayman and Northerner; and any cultivated reader will find interest in Lyle Donaghy (dead since the book appeared), D. J. O'Sullivan, Valentin Iremonger, as well as others. Since the net swept so widely through the Irish Sea, the informed reader may regret that such fish as Pierce Hutchinson, Timothy Wharton and K. Arnold Price got away. But many were caught.

—ROBERT FARREN

Memory Makes Music. By Margaret Chanler. Stephen-Paul. \$2.50.

I had just been listening to two of Bach's cantatas exquisitely sung in the Parish Church at Aldeburgh (Aldeburgh, which is a small fishing township on the Suffolk coast, has its own music festival inspired and directed by Benjamin Britten). The utter purity of these works was still in my ears and in my mind, and I was cursing the conscience which was taking me to London in the middle of such an aesthetic feast. Then, as the train moved out of the station, I remembered that I had Mrs. Chanler's book, unread, in my brief case. I opened it, and there at once was the very voice of a supremely cultivated old lady talking to me about the music I had just heard. For Mrs. Chanler's immense musical erudition had begun with Bach. I was back at her hospitable fireside in Bedford, Mass., or, as I remember it from nine years ago, in Washington. The phonograph was turned on and we were listening to Monteverdi's madrigals, flawlessly sung by Nadia Boulanger's choir. Once again, to my delight—for we like our friends to repeat themselves—Mrs. Chanler expressed her preference for "Le Donne Ingrate," the ladies who would not yield to their lovers' desires and were carried off by Pluto to repent of their ingratitude in eternal darkness. Or we were listening to Brahms' chamber music at some concert to which she had kindly invited me, and here, once more, her own reminiscence confirmed my memory. "I worshipped Brahms in the seclusion of his songs and chamber music and let Wagner opera carry me away on a great purple wave of cosmic emotion."

Readers of *Roman Spring* and *Autumn in the Valley* already know that Mrs. Chanler can write well. She can describe and evoke and comment. She can produce the good story and the apt quotation. She has known almost everyone worth knowing, from Bergson and Liszt to Stravinsky and Toscanini, during her long lifetime of eighty-five years. Yet she wears her culture,

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as she wears her experience, lightly. She has a critical astringency which secures her judgment, and in consequence, although she can always be moved to enthusiasm, she never gushes. Yet, in one way, it is difficult to read this book without despair. One feels about Mrs. Winthrop Chanler as one felt about Maurice Baring and Charles Du Bos, that these were the last Europeans; that we have moved into an age which forbids the acquisition of a culture so profound as theirs. Culture has become organized into a political pastime, and the personal liberty which permitted the spontaneous development of taste and the satisfactions of intellectual curiosity has been everywhere rigorously curtailed.

In *Memory Makes Music* Mrs. Chanler tells us, quite simply, about the music she has enjoyed, and in doing so she tells us a great deal about the evolution of taste. Although her girlhood was spent in Rome, she was formed, like the rest of her circle, on the classical German composers; an appreciation of Verdi came later. She was young enough to feel the full impact of the Wagnerian furor. Unlike so many Wagnerians, she has never reacted against the master, recognizing the more destructive as well as the sublimer aspects of his genius. She has, in particular, an interesting appreciation of "Parsifal." Mrs. Chanler's taste has never stood still. She remembers an early performance of "The Ring," after which she saw "Sir Augustus Paget, the British Ambassador, bursting out of his box with his hands over his ears refusing to hear any more of 'that horrible stuff.' I listened with eager attention, not enchanted but vastly interested. It was a new language I wanted to understand, a new world I must learn to enjoy." That has been her spirit from the start; a disciplined interest followed in many cases by an informed enthusiasm. Generally speaking, one may describe Mrs. Chanler's cast of mind as Mediterranean; she sees the limitation of the German genius precisely in its refusal to accept limitation. We un-

derstand the connection she traces between the *limes* and Siegfried's lack of "high behaviour."

Her introduction to French music came very much later. She writes acutely of "Pelléas and Melisande" that it is "at once the last romantic and the first modern opera," and of Stravinsky "I can only say that we are dealing with a great master; perhaps we do not yet know how great he is." Mrs. Chanler was in Paris when Les Six scandalized the musical world with their novelties, and she estimates very clearly, I think, how much of that experiment is likely to endure. Very often a genius for appreciation goes hand in hand with a genius for friendship, and Mrs. Chanler has both. She herself would find it difficult to say how much her understanding of music has owed to her friendship with Nadia Boulanger. One has only to listen to Nadia Boulanger talk about music for five minutes to see the horizons open. However, the touchstone of Mrs. Chanler's taste is her fidelity to first enthusiasms even more than her devotion to new ones and also her capacity to enjoy everything that is good of its kind and to distinguish her reasons for doing so. For instance, she can appreciate Richard Strauss and still remark apropos of a performance of "Salome": "I felt as though I had been through a not wholly creditable love-affair, and was a little ashamed of the too vehement caprice."

There is, however, one great name which is generally missing from these pages, and that is Mozart. I am very curious to know why. Is it that Mozart speaks to Mrs. Chanler less intimately than Beethoven or Brahms, less sublimely, it may be, than Bach? But it is rare to find someone who admires Monteverdi and Stravinsky not prostrate at the feet of Mozart. Is it that she has never seen the great performances of Mozart—at Salzburg or Glyndebourne or Vienna? These places are also absent from Mrs. Chanler's map. Perhaps the silence about Mozart (who is for so many of us the greatest name of all and

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standing next to Shakespeare in the hierarchy of human genius)—perhaps this is no more than an accident. And in any case we do not complain. Mrs. Chanler's book, though it is small in scope and modest in tone, is nonetheless a lovely miniature, describing a mind which is a model of Christian humanism. It is wholly characteristic that her last enthusiasm should be not for the *dernier* but for what is almost the *premier cri*. When she taught the village children of Geneseo to sing Gregorian chant, the executive skill, which might well have made her a professional pianist in her own right, was able to translate her appreciation, and to do this *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*. Mrs. Chanler resented her father's refusal to let her compete in the professional field; but if she had so competed, this book might have lost its essential flavour. Everyone who reads Mrs. Chanler, and everyone who has ever enjoyed the privilege of her friendship, will be very content with her as she is.

—ROBERT SPEAIGHT

Tag- und Nachtbücher, 1939-45 (Journals and Nocturnals). By Theodor Haecker. Kösel. Munich.

These journals are those of a man of 'memories,' a man who leads a both spirited and spiritual life, a melancholy man forever at the borders of a No-Man's-land of the spirit, where demons and principalities and powers do battle for the soul of a human being. These journals . . . are formally those of a writer—indeed, one may say, of *The* writer. I mean by a writer, in this qualified sense—by a writer—shall I say, by a *total* writer, such a one who seldom exists and can only seldom exist, a man for whom everything—what he is and knows—everything—the answering fire in himself and the fire that burns him—all is thrust into the thing that he writes, into the written word, he being aware of its

ability to live its own life and to remain—*littera scripta manet*—to rise up against him or come to his defense, to bear witness for or against both himself and the life he had led . . . For such a man, to be a writer is not to have merely a profession, but a vocation . . . The journals . . . are, moreover, those of a man who has a mission—a mission which makes him both alone and lonely.

Theodor Haecker wrote these words in the introduction to his translation of Kierkegaard's journals. They may be repeated as a fitting introduction to his own. For what Haecker says of Kierkegaard applies equally to himself. He is not by accident the translator of Kierkegaard; an affinity exists between the two men. Haecker may be called perhaps without temerity the "Catholic Kierkegaard." It was through Kierkegaard that this Protestant of a small town in Württemberg found his way to the Catholic Church, and like him became a writer out of passion. This passion for the written word was so strong in him that, when the Nazi government forbade him to publish his own works (except translations), he took refuge in his diaries. He had to write in secret, at night, through all the years of the war, in perpetual anxiety lest he be discovered, and thus find himself the author of his own death warrant. He was never to see the collapse of Germany which he had predicted tirelessly. Lonely, and unobserved, he died a few days before the end of the War. But through his diaries, which he himself had destined for publication, his name is now being proclaimed louder and louder—far more than it ever was in his own lifetime.

The title *Journals and Nocturnals* is a play on words, not easily to be translated into English. It is meant, first of all, to describe diaries which were written also by night. Further, it refers to the darkness of the War-days, which Haecker saw through with eyes more than physical, and, lastly, to the spiritual struggle between the King-

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doms of Darkness and Light which these diaries reflect.

The journals contain, in the manner of Pascal's *Pensées*, a disordered abundance of thoughts which their author wrote down just as they flashed through his mind, paying no attention to continuity—sometimes rough and abrupt. For the most part, however, these aphorisms are little masterpieces, self-enclosed, possessed of an astonishing power and sublimity of expression. Philosophical reflections, moral maxims, and deep religious intuitions are interrupted by comments on political events of the day, and interwoven with critical *aperçus* of art and philosophy. In spite of this confusion, all these things together both constitute and reveal the beautiful identity of work and personality which is the greatness of Haecker.

The whole depth of the Western spiritual treasury is recalled in these diaries and transfigured in a melancholy fashion by the rays of a declining sun. This was Haecker's mission: to bridge with his many essays on the philosophy of culture the abyss that had yawned for more than a hundred years between culture and religion.* He tried to bring the Church back into contact with the fullness of Western culture, and to show to the intellectuals the way of Faith. By this, however, he did not mean to reduce Christianity to merely a cultural phenomenon, nor did he think of the decline of Western culture as the decline of Christian culture in general. Christian culture did not exist at all for him as a "culture" in the sense of the word as it is applied in the phrases "Greek culture" or "Roman culture." There is between Christianity and culture only the possibility of a fruitful

union—an animation of culture by the Faith. And such a possibility can be realized for all cultures.

The import of these diaries is to show forth Christian existence in the midst of an un-Christian world. This is what justifies their publication and makes them so interesting, even more for non-Germans than for German readers. They are living testimony of how a Christian in Germany lived through the development of anti-Christian power, how he debated within himself the ideas of the new German "Herrgotts-Religion" and carried them *ad absurdum*. Haecker recognized that the essence of National Socialism was the apostasy of the German nation, which last, in his opinion, already tended naturally to the heresies of Pelagius and Arius, "by nature—that is, owing to its own great capacities, which make it proud, and to its pride, which makes it intellectually superficial" (p. 299). He saw the tragic destiny of the Germans in the fact that "they received gratuitously (*umsonst*) the vocation to forge the *Sacrum Imperium*, but received it in vain (in German also *umsonst*) because they apostatized for the very sake of the *Imperium* as an idea" (p. 47). The vocation, however, remains, and leads them to ever-fresh attempts to conquer, and to new wars which, even when temporarily successful, result only in the perfect organization of a total-state, in the ghostly skeleton of a stillborn *Reich*. (Here lies an analogy to the destiny of the Jews: a vocation followed by an apostasy which was not able to efface the indelible marks of that vocation.) The diaries reflect the bitter conflict between natural patriotism and supernatural faith, a conflict into which in those times all Catholics in Germany were drawn—which displayed a new aspect of the Imitation of Christ to them. "Does not now stand threatening before every Christian this cross of Christ, that in the end he will be said to be an enemy of his own people?" (p. 92). The German Christian, indeed, had to wish for the defeat of his fatherland out of a love

*The principal works of Haecker are: *Kierkegaard und die Philosophie der Innerlichkeit*, 1913. *Satire und Polemik*, 1922. *Christentum und Kultur*, 1927. *Vergil, Vater des Abendlandes*, 1931. *Wahrheit und Leben*, 1930. Translations with introductions: Kierkegaard, Newman, Belloc, Vergil, Francis Thompson.

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of justice while at the same time fearing defeat out of his love for the just men.

The diaries wheel in continual circles around the central problem of theodicy. Why does God permit these times to be? Haecker cannot answer the question. Therefore nothing remains but a Christian desperation: the putting down of Reason and the elevation of absolute Faith, of *credo ut intellegam*. "I have suffered very much in my life, physically as well as psychically. But only once did my suffering lead to my doubting the justice of God and to a rebellion, and even then, the mercy of God restrained me, so that instead of the malediction that rose to my lips, I stammered the benediction of Christ: 'Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonas, because you believe!' " (p. 56). And in another place he writes, "If a man would doubt the existence of God because he did not understand Him, he will not have Faith at all; for it is only in the not understanding of Him that Faith begins" (p. 46). Haecker is the proper theologian of the *Deus absconditus*. "The incomprehensibility of God stands before all my silences and behind all my works. If I could express it, I would be a very great writer" (p. 44). "... In such times as these, I can live only the night of Faith; there is no terrestrial probability—surely there is no certainty shining forth any longer that the God of which Scripture and the Church speak is active . . . For Kierkegaard, faith while on earth is almost the same as it is for John of the Cross: a night—a complete night in comparison to all human understanding" (p. 175). Therefore *Journals and Nocturnals* is further a mirror of the darkness of Faith in which Haecker lived in the midst of the spotlight-glare of the War-days.

His struggle with the problems forced on him by the *Deus absconditus*, however, always ended in his falling silent before the Incomprehensible, about which one cannot intellectualize as one can do with the God of the philosophers, but only adore, because He is Love itself—the Lord of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Father of Jesus Christ.

Haecker would not content himself with the "Aeon" of Faust only (whom he looked upon as a mere bourgeois hero of Progress). He thought that the simplest believing Christian would already have overcome this Faustian childishness. He wanted more—the Absolute—"only the Absolute and nothing else" (p. 296).

Haecker became the prophet of a new type of saint: "The attributes of God are too manifold to be lived by one saint alone. He is not yet here, but he will come—the saint *ab incomprehensibilitate Dei*" (p. 161).

The diaries are the spiritual testament of "a just man . . . who, though he is dead, he yet speaks." More properly, it ought to be said that he speaks only after death. Haecker was a prophet in the wilderness, but not a *vox clamantis in deserto*. His attitude is characteristic of the attitude of almost all Catholic intellectuals in Germany during Nazism. He had the gift of discerning spirits, and also human voices (of the latter he makes much in the diaries), but he considered it a burden. "It is an eery Cassandra-experience not to be able to communicate one's most certain perceptions, that is, what one sees and hears directly, one's immediate intuitions, to other people—not even to those whom you like and who are not stupid—because they do not see or hear at all. . . . Sometimes I am tempted to ask God to spare me from such painful recognitions and tormenting auditions. What should I do? Keep silent? Or speak too tardily?" (p. 297). Haecker kept silent. He did not cry out to the powerful of this world, "*non licet*!" as the *vox clamantis* did—and here in this silence, perhaps, lies the metaphysical reason which Haecker sought for the apostasy of the Reformation and the consequent downfall of Germany in our time. Perhaps Germany was crushed because of this silence, even though there were many more just men in Germany

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than the ten who alone would have been enough to save Sodom.

—EVA-MARIA JUNG

Mediaeval Institute
University of Notre Dame

Das unauslöschliche Siegel (The Indelible Seal). By Elizabeth Langgässer. Hamburg.

The commotion stirred up by Miss Langgässer has now lasted for several years. Her novel "The Indelible Seal" has been hailed as a work of Dantesque proportions by some and has been thoroughly condemned by others. In the March issue of the highly respected German monthly *Hochland* she published an article in self-defense ("Possibilities of a Christian Poet Today") which takes a courageous stand and upholds her position with deep conviction. Her position is as debatable and as hotly contested, although for different reasons, as Graham Greene's in the English-speaking world. Both have written Catholic books, but both are being hotly attacked by fellow Catholics. Both, together with Georges Bernanos, give no ready-made conclusion, pass no judgment. And yet Greene's "open end" is on a second plane, is in him and the reader, while Langgässer's novel even breaks through its form. One can read Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* as a novel which is well written, has a complete plot, and which flows smoothly in a great arch to its end when you lay the book away. The question mark is in your conscience, in your mind, while on paper all is well from a technical point of view.

Miss Langgässer's book is not only apparently chaotic and evasive in its plot, if there is one, but most bewildering in details. On the inside of the cover you are warned not to expect "lineal evolutions of individuals"—as in Graham Greene's *Scobie*—but a "cosmos," a cataclysm, and a new creation, something "like an amphitheater, beyond time and space," whose

show and plot is the struggle between God and Satan. The editor asks you to use as a compass a bookmark which gives you a score, indicating the themes, the motifs, the locale, and the time, oscillating without apparent reason between 1914, 1926 and 1943, between Hessia, Paris, Serlis, Lisieux and Africa. In her book as well as in her article Miss Langgässer shows an amazing familiarity with modern literature—James Joyce, Bernanos, Gide, Graham Greene—with theology and liturgy, with psychoanalysis, psychiatry, science, sociology, and history. There is hardly a field of the modern mind in which she does not walk with a sure foot and from which she does not loot material with which to build. It may be this enormous encyclopedic reach of her background and her bold use of her insights which brought on the comparison with Dante. The juxtaposition of the flashing scenes thrown on the screen, the distribution and orchestration of her themes, the mood of her poetic composition are her secret, and the building in its concept is so vast and labyrinthine that neither the directions on the bookmark, nor her article, nor the patience of the explorer yields a bird's eye perspective. There is an excitement, a restlessness spread over almost all of the novel which makes it impossible to "enjoy" this book. You will lay it down anywhere you stop—as much as at the end—with a feeling of complete exhaustion. The persons of the drama emerge from nowhere and disappear or re-emerge in new shapes and disappear, like the hero, Lazarus Belfontaine, a baptized Jew who remains a Jew, a naturalized Frenchman who seems to have two lives separated by a possibility of amnesia.

This cinematic book of flash backs and prophetic prolepsis, of orchestral subtleties lost in the wrong medium of words and print has some very significant shortcomings, whether intentional or indicative of a real lack: e.g. its dialogue. Side by side with endless and tiresome monologues and meditations of great richness, there are ab-

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solutely flat conversations, which convey the helplessness of the author's trying to conjure up live individuals. No excuse can justify this. These banal, cacophonous, and aimless dialogues betray, perhaps intentionally, a lack of communication which seems to remove the whole book from the realm of novels.

Miss Langgässer knows that her critics are baffled and amazed by the absence of any plot. She "frankly" answers:

"I am bored by webs of complex plots and legends as by so many atomisms. I wish we could do without them. Modern Christian fiction is not so much continuous and engaging action, but a system of coördinates of reciprocal powers, a stage on which God and Satan meet. The individual's reactions in this combat make up the plot; his ontological and providential place in it, not his causality, is our plot. This plot is the same at all times: sin, grace, and redemption and its share in the august monotony of eternity, which is the opposite of boredom. Boredom is the criterion of sin."

On her stage is Belfontaine, himself no person of flesh and blood but a specter, surrounded by other Brueghel-like figures: his two wives, one mediocre and lamblike, the other lecherous and perverted. Belfontaine's own later shadow from Nazi-created Eastern ghettos and gas chambers is proleptically spirited across the stage in the first book. Trite gourmets, adulterous and Lesbian women, greedy and dishonest officeholders, mediocre and charitable priests, two saints, St. Benoit Labre and the Little Flower, intellectuals and morons, wordly nuns and pseudo-mystical housekeepers are whisked across the stage or sound like a faint tune in the welter of a confused instrumentation. Her dislike of continuous action leads the "poet-composer-director" to a technique which sets up scenery, brings in the *dramatis personae*, bids them act and then drops the curtain and leaves you with a few vague indications in italics of what may have happened and the exasperated feeling of not being able to complete your reflection.

For the plot of one novel the struggle of God against Satan is a large order. For the creative and formative power of the composer of this symphony (out of its real medium) the number of themes and of instruments seems equally too large. Miss Langgässer's erudition and the universality of her apprehension is immense. Her sensuousness seems like an artifice and lacks the fleshly, voluptuous quality of D. H. Lawrence or Hemingway. The result is a disharmonious vulgarity in many instances. Her grandiosity in the attempt to sweep the cosmos into her visions creates a hastiness, a breathless effort which makes the reader pant, tire and rebel. Her images of speech slip from one metaphor into another and there is a certain screechy sound in her style.

"With trembling hands he seized the large water pitcher and poured the stale and lukewarm liquid into the glass. Then, without taking a drink, he whisked a sheet of paper across the desk and scribbled on it without ever pausing, with pedantic, little strokes which did not entirely lack intelligence and showed sensuality in their arches and thickened flourishes"—a whole book of this with no glimpse of humor leads to an unrelieved tenseness and constipated feeling of annoyance.

In these chaotic visions appear like lights in "too mysterious a mystery," such passages as the following which shed light on the author herself. While Belfontaine, after disappearing from his first wife in Germany, now again living in a bourgeois marriage in Seulis, enjoys a gargantuan dinner, he "hears . . . that orchestra which without ever attaining the point of playing a good ensemble, continues to tune the instruments unceasingly, to bring pure music to the last judgment." This is said about the "world-noise" of the city, but it might have been said of this novel itself.

She reveals her innermost heart when she speaks of *Sacré Coeur* on Montmartre with its pseudo-mauresque domes and arches, as "this church for women, hot

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with hysteria, for penitents and spiritual morphinists." She becomes clairvoyant when she contrasts Christian mysteries of the sacramental order with the Sermon on the Mount and social ethics, as being naturally opposed "like Seneca and Plotinus to the cave of Mithras." Belfontaine is the "rootless intellectual" torn by doubt, the Ahasverus incarnated, corroded by doubt and knowledge. Yet he appears to one of his intelligent observers in this novel to be perfect: "honorable and respected, healthy and serene, without hysteria and reasonable" to the degree of appearing to be almost spectral, lucid like clear glass "recently wiped clean." He does not seem to live by food, to have a body, he is "reason." "'Great God,' the druggist says: 'you have in your entrails a synagogue, a reformed one, no Shabbes, no Hebrew, no rites, just plain reason, no drugs and opiates—and no grace either.'"

In his answers—that cryptic vagueness which sideswipes blasphemy—there is a Faustian insight: "Any disciple of Mithras, any son of the great Mother of Eleusis can speak like St. Peter Chrysologus."

These scenes, these monologues, these flashbacks, these *aperçus*, these salty and vulgar episodes, these sublime meditations are preceded by an enigmatic prologue and followed by an epilogue whose key their maker threw away. Between what is called book and chapter, long and wordy, themes and motifs, directions in italics tie the parts together, sometimes with complete disregard of the story told, suggesting lies and hypocrisies, leaving persons dangling unresolved by analysis.

This book is Gothic, mystic, erotic and romantic—if you want it classified and labeled. It is as chaotic as life. It leaves the pat-and-ready-answer-Christian baffled. Its very insufficiency, the appearance, that of a human dwarf trying to whirl a cosmos into shape, that of a human-sized writer in a medium of music, poetry, nature, history, and prophecy daring a super-human task—these things make this novel sig-

nificant. Its gigantism is German, as is its unrelieved seriousness and its amorphic grandeur. It is too unredeemed to be seen side by side with Dante, too dissonant to be heard with Mozart or even Sibelius. At times it seems almost sophomoric, especially in its dialogue and scenes of passion and yet, as a whole, it "sounds." Why is it that Shakespeare's *Tempest* and Goethe's *Faust II* come to my mind when I try to find its shelf? All its seams are visible, its floor plan is lost, unfinished wings gape at you, it contains journalese side by side with hagiography, spiritual awareness as if written by mystics alongside of sultry pulp eroticism—this is as significant of Man as the Tower of Babel.

—H. A. REINHOLD

This Is Catholic Fiction. By Sister Mariella Gable, O.S.B. Sheed & Ward. \$50.

There will probably never be any clear-cut definition of what Catholic literature and particularly Catholic fiction is. Theorists in the matter seem destined to go merrily on their way, much in the fashion of the aestheticians who have been cudgeling their brains these many centuries to arrive at a definition of beauty. The five essays in this brochure are Sister Mariella's noteworthy attempt to carry the discussion a step further. The author believes that the key to a definition of Catholic fiction lies in an understanding of the Catholic notion of personality. This notion she appropriates from Dietrich von Hildebrand's *Liturgy and Personality*. Von Hildebrand believes that personality is to be measured by an habitual, appropriate response to value, a response to the hierarchy that exists in beings, which demands that some receive less love, some more.

Applying this concept to the question of Catholic fiction, Sister Mariella believes that such fiction can be written only about people who have personality in this sense. Now this obviously leads into no small morass of difficulties. The completely in-

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tegral personality, one which always and at all times makes the proper response to value, will be that of the saint, and a book which is not written about saints cannot be, specifically speaking, a Catholic book. This however, would certainly be to restrict the meaning of Catholic fiction to almost intolerable limits. To avoid such narrowness, the author makes her distinction between "fiction of the center," "fiction round the bull's-eye of the center," and "peripheral fiction that does not have a Catholic message but is strong in the local color of Catholic life."

Her first category includes, and is bound to include, a very small number of novels, those novels mainly which deal with saints. Here she singles out for special mention Bernanos' *The Star of Satan*. The second category would include novels which deal with lesser personalities but which are still permeated with Catholic doctrine in one field or another, frequently merely in the field of sound natural ethics.

In this second category as well, Sister Mariella would include, I believe, such books as Greene's *The Heart of the Matter*, for though the main character does not live his life according to an appropriate value-response, he does know and realize the values he shirks living up to.

Sister Mariella's ingenious application of the Christian concept of personality was suggested to her because she was not satisfied with the catholic and comprehensive view of Catholic literature stated by Sister Madeleva. Sister Madeleva had defined Catholic literature as any literature that is treated as a Catholic would treat it, and a Catholic, she says, is one who is perfectly disciplined, a saint.

I believe that Sister Mariella is correct in having some demurrers on Sister Madeleva's definition. Logically, Sister Madeleva holds that Catholic literature can be written only by a saint. This is to ask too much, but I believe that Sister Mariella also demands too much, because, according

to her thesis, real Catholic literature can be written only *about* saints.

I believe that somewhere between these two approaches lies the proper definition of Catholic literature. With Sister Mariella I believe that we will get nowhere without the distinction between Catholic literature in a specific sense and in a wider, general sense. But I believe too, that we ought to start from the other end and from a definition of Catholic literature in a wider sense rise to a more specific analysis. I believe that we ought to start with what is naturally good and sound. That can certainly be incorporated into the concept of Catholic literature, though the book may be written by no saint at all, and about no saints at all. In this sense I believe that great expanses of literature can truly be called Catholic though it must be admitted that they will be Catholic in a minimum degree. I would not demand a specifically Catholic local color of them. I would simply demand that they be true to human nature and to human values.

After all, the proper response to values need not always be a supernatural response, and a non-Catholic may respond, for example, to the beauties of nature in a purely natural way. If so, he will be exercising his personality in a proper fashion.

If we rise above this natural goodness which may be enough to make literature Catholic in a wide and general sense, what else would be needed to specify the Catholic content of a novel? I believe that what is needed is a sense of the supernatural. If that is included in the novel, then we have a book that is more specifically Catholic. But here again this may be in two senses. The supernatural may be seen by the characters but not realized in their own lives. This type of book will be specifically Catholic but not eminently so. If the supernatural is both seen and realized in action, then we will have a novel eminently Catholic—the type Sister Mariella calls "Catholic fiction of the center."

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It will appear that I agree with a great deal of Sister Mariella's theory—and I do. I believe that we have to make the distinction between specific and comprehensive Catholic literature. I believe that the greatest Catholic literature will be of the "center," in her sense, but I believe that she unduly restricts the scope of Catholic literature by ruling out what is sound and good on a purely natural level.

After all, we have been told, have we not, that the Church is the mistress of the arts. If that be true, then any sound art is the child of the Church. Any good book will be a Catholic book, at least in a minimum sense. I believe that if we do not hold this we are faced with the danger of making Catholic literature so restricted in scope as to give the impression of provincialism.

—HAROLD C. GARDINER, S.J.

Dante the Philosopher. By Étienne Gilson. Translated by David Moore. London: Sheed and Ward. \$4.00.

This English version of Gilson's *Dante et la philosophie* comes about twelve years after the appearance of the original. If it still retains the controversy with Father Mandonnet in the main part instead of placing it in footnotes, certain readers may enjoy it for thus being able to verify the contrast between the obsolete and the "revived" Catholic Dante scholarship, the latter only interesting this journal as a part of the literary revival.

What Father Mandonnet actually could not understand was first that a poet is by definition something different from a philosopher, second that one could be a good Christian philosopher in the thirteenth and fourteenth century without being a Thomist, third that symbolic poetry is different from "allegorical rubbish" (72), and fourth that even an intelligent man could love.

It is from these premises that Gilson vindicates from the outset as Dante's Muse the living Florentine girl, Beatrice, as much

living as a saint in Heaven by "perfect continuity of essence under diversified conditions" (73), as she was living when she walked in her youth through Florence. She remains invariably the same personality who "remembers that she was beautiful" (55) and aroused once the young poet's carnal, yes "profoundly carnal love" (59), and later helped him to follow on his part the right way to salvation. This Beatrice transformed into Dante's poetical ideal with "not a single case . . . in which the salutary intercession of Beatrice does not owe something of its efficacy to the memory of her bodily beauty" (69) is the heroine of the *Vita Nuova* and of the *Divina Commedia*. She certainly is not, as Gilson sarcastically stresses, Dante's lost "clerical vocation" or "theology" or a "number" or a "cord" or the "tonsure" or the "bishop of Florence" or the "Light of Glory."

The philosopher in Dante drastically comes to the fore, it is true, in the *Convivio*, the *Monarchia* and in certain parts of the *Commedia*. In the *Convivio* it strikes the reader that Dante attributes to the philosopher the task of working out an earthly happiness *secundum quid*. This cannot lie in the realm of contemplation, as Aristotle thought, because contemplation can be reached only partly here by theology, entirely only in Heaven. Therefore the highest goal in this practical realm of action can be reached only by natural ethics, not by metaphysics. Thus Dante, at odds with Aristotle and St. Thomas (105), starts to separate the domains of reason and faith in his own way. With his two "beatitudes," earthly and heavenly, Dante, however, is no Latin Averroist, because he maintains the hierarchical order of philosophy and theology. But Dante's is a curious, apparently reverse order of the philosophical branches with no room for natural theology (108) and beyond this, all sciences are sovereign queens to him and none is *ancilla theologiae*. This order is as vitally anchored in Dante's political experience as a Florentine citizen (109) as his unshakable belief

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in personal immortality, philosophically "satisfied at small cost" (123), is anchored in his Beatrice experience.

As a German-Empire-minded Italian, threatened in his possessions and in his social existence, Dante is short of expulsion from a political Florence siding with the pope and his French allies. In this situation Dante desperately works out a system of a world government which could better take care of such difficulties. On the other hand, St. Thomas in Paris never had any reason even to think of such a world empire and actually never speaks of an emperor of any kind (179). Dante's idea of a world government, of course, had to be based on a philosophical system where the gradualism, dear to St. Thomas Aquinas, would be admitted only as a gradualism of dignity but not as one of authority. Thus this world government could become a kind of "Natural Church" (16). Consequently the Emperor is called up directly by God to protect in the earthly realm the relative happiness based on the findings of the philosopher. He has the immediate mission to do in the realm of action, government, peace and justice the same as the philosopher, represented by the divinely-chosen Aristotle (145), had to do in the realm of truth, natural thought and the "good of the intellect." Pope and priesthood would have their God-willed activities in the supernatural realm of the Church, based on revelation and aided by theology. The highest dignity would remain with the Church because, by analogy, also the contemplative intelligences are higher and more divine than the active ones.

These ideas are at sharp distance from Averroism (140, 214). The gradation of dignity is evident: the emperor is considered as a master, the pope as a spiritual father (189). Dante's theory is highly original in so far as it denies the juridical dependence of the lower on the higher order, and stresses instead their spiritual interdependence.

The literary critic has not to decide whether these ideas are "correct" but how far in the *Commedia* these philosophico-political ideas are subdued to primarily poetical intentions. Dante's political theory therefore explains the presence of so many popes in Dante's Hell: they encroached by principle on the rights of the Empire, more by greed than by zeal for the keys. Why is Siger of Brabant in Heaven? and praised beyond this by St. Thomas himself? Not erroneously because Dante did not know enough about his Averroistic teachings; not by Dante's malice and not because Siger was converted perhaps at the end of his life to Thomism and Dante knew it, but because Thomas in Heaven, not Thomas in Paris, sees that Siger's apparent over stressing of philosophical "secularism," kept at least philosophy from being methodically mixed up with theology and served the purity (161) of disciplines dear to St. Thomas no less than to Dante. Why do we find the half-heretical spiritualist Joachim da Fiore in Heaven too? Because, by his opposite over stressing of the spirituality of the Church he kept her safe from being mixed up with the policy of the Empire. Here is the genius of Dante at his peak when he invents symbolic representatives for his own ideas and changes, in the way it is allowed to poets, historical truth into poetical truth.

These are some high lights of Gilson's book which prove that in discussing a philosopher who is a poet, the literary historian and critic, certainly, has more to say than the philosopher who is interested only in ideologies but not in the deeper symbolism, structure and *raison d'être* of a poetical work of art. Gilson has an excellent grasp of the decisive Dante scholarship. In his personal approach he comes closest to the concepts of the late Master Michele Barbi (50, 88).

Since Miss La Piana paved the way for interesting a larger public in Dante's "American Pilgrimage," let us hope that readers will also be found for Gilson's

most interesting—but for the amateur perhaps too complicated—book. A larger public may be attracted by some stylistic concessions of the popularizing type like this: "Of the women who hear themselves called angels, very few expect to be treated as symbols" (14). This is inconsistent with Gilson's concept that "the cultured reader having sufficiently elevated literary tastes, but no special erudition . . . surrenders himself to the genius of the poet" (51).

On the whole the book is not of the vulgarizing type at all, and therefore it is regrettable that the bibliography has not been brought up to date and important items such as Herman Conrad's *Dantes Staatslehre im Spiegel der scholastischen Philosophie seiner Zeit* (1946) and Romano Guardini's *Vision und Dichtung. Der Charakter von Dantes goettlicher Komödie* (1945) are missing.

—HELMUT HATZFELD

The Catholic University

A Lexicon of St. Thomas Aquinas based on the Summa Theologica and selected passages of his other works. By Roy J. Deferrari and Sister M. Inviolata Barry with the technical collaboration of Ignatius McGuiness, O.P. Washington: Catholic University of America. Fascicle I, A-C. 1949.

In an indirect way the Catholic literary revival received one of its earliest impulses from the encouragement of Thomistic studies by Leo XIII. Sixty years after the start of the Leonine Thomas Edition, on which it is based, this impressive lexicon makes its appearance. It goes under a title similar to that of the older glossary of L. Schütz, but it supersedes, enlarges, modernizes, completes and nevertheless modestly acknowledges as its source this fragmentary older work.

Deferrari-Barry's dictionary is a definite and classical work. It includes proper names, cross references to synonyms and antonyms together with a mine of quotations and a large apparatus of semantic

subdivisions. The Latin quotations give any user of the lexicon the opportunity of judging whether the English correspondences hit the "Intentio Thomae." They illustrate furthermore the subtleties of his terminology.

It is a study in itself to browse through the terminological abstracts and their meanings, particularly combined with certain epithets focusing on much of St. Thomas' teaching in a nutshell. Not only considering the *Summa* in its entirety but also the other works of the Angelic Doctor in a more selective fashion, the editors offer many semasiological surprises. Some of the interesting words along these lines are: *absolutio*, *accidens* (completum, simplex, extraneum, copulatum, exterius, separabile), *actio* (disponens, perficiens, hierarchica, humana, indiscreta, ludrica), *actus* (moralis, malus, deficiens, figuralis, imperatus, notionalis), *adoratio*, *amicitia* (cognata, politica, coniugalit, fraterna, heterica), *amor*, *anima*, *appetitus* (consiliativus, inquisitivus, libidinosus, voluntarius), *argumentum*, *ars* (pigmentaria, navifactiva, pulmentaria, usualis), *attritio*, *avaritia* (iniusta usurpatio uxoris alienae), *beatitudo*, *causa*, *charitas*, *cognitio*, *compositio*, *comprehensio* (possession of God), *conditio*, *consummatio*.

But there are also concretes which one would not suspect in the works of the Doctor Communis e.g. *accipiter* (hawk), *actor* (administrator), *aestas* (with two meanings), *agricola* (boor), *architecton* (master-builder), *argentum* (money, like French *l'argent*), *assumptio* in the sense of "the sacrament of the altar" (quia per hoc filii deitatem assumimus), *bananus*, *Bulgari* (the Bulgarians), *calcaneum* (heel), *caliga* (shoe of leather), *camporivus* (referring to exchange of money), *caverna* (grotto), *chaunos* (braggadocio), *commater* (god-mother), *commixtio* (carnal connection), *condimentum* (seasoning), *conscientia* (matter of conscience, casus), *scriptio* (letter), *consistentia* (matter), *conversatio* (way of life e.g. *conversatio regularis* =

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monachatus), *cooperculum* (lid), *cortina* (curtain).

The task of Sr. Inviolata in ordering the material was immense. Therefore who would blame her for some oversights and missprints (e.g. culape 29, for culpae) in this *magnum opus*? Sometimes her philological discernment was not sharp enough e.g. *acedia* (qua homo redditur tardus ad spirituales actus) cannot be translated by "disgust for spiritual blessings," *aedificatio* does not yield to the meaning "concrete building," the interpretation of *anagoge* as "mystical sense" is too vague, Apollinaris is not Appolinaris; *commasatio* certainly has a chaotic implication like *massa damnata*. *Compluitur* from a transitive verb *compluere* cannot be listed as *compluit*, to rain upon, but as *compluo* (*Deus compluit civitatem*). *Coetus* (*fidelium*) in the meaning of assembly, should not appear under *coitus*, because *coetus* and *coitus* in the Late and Middle Latin certainly are not the same word any more, but two so-called semantic homonyms under the guise of phonetical doublets; *cul-tellus* has lost its diminutive meaning in Vulgar Latin and can not mean a small knife, the less so as Saint Thomas who uses it *pari passu* with *cultus* identifies it as much with his own Italian word *coltello* as his French listeners in Paris identified it with their *couteau* (Mod. French *couteau*).

Finally, therefore, one could ask whether for fixing the meanings the aid of Forcellini, *Thesaurus*, Godefroy and Ducange was not a necessity. In a dictionary to such a universal and creative author which goes purposely beyond a glossary and anticipates to a small extent even the promised concordance, the originality of St. Thomas in word creation, word formation and semantics should have been brought to the fore. The still lacking linguistic and philological interest in St. Thomas thus could have been aroused. At least a hint would have been welcome (e.g. *attritio*, *contritio*, *compunctio*, *baptizatio*,

benefactivus, *cibatio*, *credulitas* = *opinio*). But even so, the new *Lexicon of St. Thomas* with all its unavoidable shortcomings promises to be a pivotal, rich and competent work. It would not mean much to praise it by comparison with the excellent new glossary of Later Latin by Alexander Souter. It may rather be compared in importance, rank and scope to nothing less than Gerhard Kittel's *Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament*.

—HELMUT HATZFELD

The Catholic University

Many Dimensions, All Hallows' Eve, and Descent Into Hell. By Charles Williams. Pellegrini and Cudahy. Each \$2.75.

Pellegrini and Cudahy have decided to initiate their Charles Williams' series of novels by printing his theological romances in reverse order apparently on the dual principle that the last should be first, and that, moreover, Williams, in the above three volumes, had reserved his best until last. C. S. Lewis, Williams' *fidus Achates* even as Williams in life was Lewis' *animae dimidium meae*, must surely approve the decision. He considers the final two volumes far superior to those that went before. The "distance," he writes, "between *War in Heaven* and the sobriety and strength of the *Descent* and the *Eve* is a remarkable witness to his continually growing self-correcting art." As it happens, I prefer the romantic trio, the bright brine of essential romance of the first three stories, which have not yet been published in America. But perhaps this is no more than preferring, say, *Pickwick* and *Coppenfield* to *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations*. One can argue either way.

Many Dimensions is the Nicholas Nickleby of the Williams canon: brisk; sprightly; young; having, in the French phrase, the defects of its qualities, but, more importantly, having also the qualities of its defects. It is the only one of Williams' seven novels which approximates that tonic English speciality, the "boy's book," a

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term which means so much more and such a different set of things in England than it does in America. That is, it lies somewhere between the early Wells and such an excellent juvenile as, say, *The Woodenbeads*, in the famous old Christmas annual, *Chatterbox*. It rings with queer bookish curses invented by a shy recluse who obviously liked pirate stories. It is the last of Williams' books to have a "villain" in the good old-fashioned sense of that melodramatic term. It was in *War in Heaven* that one first met the apish Sir Giles Tumulty, so like Stevenson's Mr. Hyde and so eminent a member of the Doyle-Buchan tradition of miscreants with Irish names. He is the only character the inordinately original Williams ever repeated; and he is worth repeating. And, finally, to sum up this quality of youth, in *Many Dimensions* the old *Arabian Nights* cross the plane of the *New Arabian Nights* in the most enchanting fashion.

The enchantment exerted by Islam on the English imagination, even on Lawrence and Galsworthy in our own century, has been literally amazing. Like all of Williams' reactions to intellectual and imaginative stimuli, his reaction to the spell of Arabia is multiple. First of all, he pays his respects to Mohammedan monotheism—for some reason or other Hebrew monotheism never seems to have attracted him, possibly because it was an historic phase that is no longer vital in the sense the monotheism of Allah is still vital. Secondly, as in the case of a certain Master Copperfield, the old tales of the Genii nourished his fancy in childhood and helped keep alive his hope "of something beyond that place and time," a spiritual function they also discharged for little John Henry Newman a full decade before Charles Dickens got to know them. Newman has left a celebrated record of their effect on his emergent religious sense:

I used to wish the Arabian tales were true: my imagination ran on unknown influences, on magical powers,

and talismans . . . I thought life might be a dream, or I an Angel, and all this world a deception, my fellow-angels by a playful device concealing themselves from me, and deceiving me with the semblance of a material world.

In *Many Dimensions* Williams' exuberant imagination not only runs on "unknown influences, on magical powers, and talismans," it also runs on sundry Scholastic matters which those pre-Thomistic Aristotelians, the Arab doctors, gave so much thought to: notably Prime Matter and the Philosopher's Stone. The Great Talisman for which Sir Giles intrigues is nothing less than the First Matter. To secure it against the evil ones who covet it the august monarch of Djinn and Afreets, Suleiman ben Daood, Solomon the son of David, and a good English Quixote who is simultaneously Carroll's White Knight and also Chesterton's and Lewis' Good Agnostic, Lord Arglay, Chief Justice of England, join hands across the centuries.

The early Williams' debt to Chesterton is very evident in this book. Besides the concept of the Good Agnostic—Williams refers at one point to Lord Arglay's "fastidious and ironical good will which, outside mystical experience, is the finest and noblest capacity man has developed in and against the universe"—he rings all the possible changes on "high" as Chesterton used to do on "great." Ibrahim is an *echi* Chestertonian apparition, there is a flight-and-pursuit harlequinade straight out of *Thursday*, and, on one occasion, *Notting Hill's* Charter and private sanctities are fervently invoked.

The Catholic reader will not boggle at the Priestleyan kinks in time; they are priestly as well as Priestley. But he cannot fail to notice anew the oddly eclectic nature of Williams' theology as measured against Lewis' or Dorothy Sayers' orthodoxy. What is one to make of the Beatific Vision without hint of Christ or even the note of Personality?

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But, after all, *Many Dimensions* is not intended to be Christianity, only Islam and, of course, Scholasticism. The Grail had glinted bright in *War in Heaven*; here flashes the more ancient Seal of Solomon. Not at all belying the promise of its title, *Many Dimensions* opens multi-dimensional vistas before the readers: glimpses into Time; into Motion; into Prime Matter. The result is a metaphysical melodrama, a Scholastic romp as Schoolmen Scotus and Abelard might have conceived it. Williams' peculiar psychological powers never had freer, more radiant play than here. His is a psychology of essences, more than of individuals; of woman more than of women; of the feminine more than of the female; of a "softness of generosity and lovely haste" more than of a conventional amorous frenzy. Above all, of Love, the unvarying theme underlying all his subsidiary themes. From this latter point of view *Many Dimensions* is a Song of Solomon that bows before the Dantean *amour courtois*.

All Hallows' Eve, like the gray terrain of Lewis' *Great Divorce*, is a purgatorial vestibule. With it the romance of the city takes a new turn; enters, as it were, a new dimension.. It is no longer the City of Balzac, of Stevenson and Chesterton. It is become archetypal, the result of Williams' multiplaned superimposition of Bunyan's and Augustine's City of God on the urban pastorate of *The New Arabian Nights* and the Hitchcockian metropolis of Greene's thrilling "entertainments." Very possibly in Simon, the magus, there is a bit too much of the necromantic mummery that hurts the middle novels, *The Greater Trumps* and *Shadows of Ecstasy*. For the closer Williams approaches to the conventional shocker, the weaker his effect. He is no Montague Rhodes James; nor, despite his prose lapses into a too ecstatic Jamesian, no Henry James either. In the last analysis he is writing *spirit stories*, not *ghost stories*.

It may not be unfair to describe *Descent Into Hell* as Williams' most mature masterpiece. It gathers up into itself his four worlds: criticism, drama, poetry, novel; and translates them to the unvarying Dantean dimension in which all of Williams' work lives and breathes and has its being: the plane of Love. In basic concept and situation it is very close to his 1939 pageant play, *Judgement at Chelmsford*, for which, incidentally, he uses the pseudonym, Peter Stanhope. Peter Stanhope is the name of the *punctum indifferens*, the Conradian Marlowe of *Descent Into Hell*. It is through Peter Stanhope's consciousness that we get certain tantalizing glimpses into Williams' own consciousness that his ideas were elusive. For example, Stanhope tells the amateur troupe rehearsing his Masque that he could explain it to them only by reading it completely through aloud; and, again, he hints that he "would rather have the meaning lost than too firmly explained, and that speed was an element." Which quotation must stand, alongside T. S. Eliot's remarking in affectionate despair that what Williams has to say "comes near to defying definition," as the present reviewer's *apologia* for failing to pluck the whole heart out of Williams' mystery.

Essentially *Descent Into Hell* is a psychological narrative of damnation and of salvation, with an intermediate Limbo stage of Vergilian *voces biantes*, of poor groping dead who gather about Mrs. Sammile in the cemetery, their faces "bleak with a dreadful starvation." But, despite the incredible power of the portrait of Wentworth damned, and despite the title, the book is much more a study in salvation—even for the nameless suicide—than in damnation. There is more real preoccupation with damnation in the earlier and, paradoxically, blither books. It is almost as if the basic ambivalence—what Lewis calls the "two-sidedness," and Williams the "double enlargement" of his work—grew fainter the longer he lived; as if,

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even imaginatively, Williams, whose whole work poises on the pivot of eternal choice, found it harder and harder, at the end, to conceive of any but the right choice. Like Samuel Johnson's, his literary watch dial read *the night cometh when no man can work*. Like the great Christian of Lichfield before him, that fear was finally exorcised.

In a way, I suppose, the respective climaxes of Williams' romantic art, considered purely as art, occur at the close of *The Place of the Lion*, and, in *Descent Into Hell*, in the hellish nocturne of Wentworth's walk with the succubus through the misty night. Quite obviously the Shem and Shaun river whisperings of *Annalivia Plurabelle* have been assimilated to another purpose here; and magnificently so. An equally gorgeous *tour de force* is the succubus' evil counterfeit of Paradise, a counterfeit even to the point of reversing *Alice's* archetypal tiny door. Here is Hell's spurious betrayal: the fool's gold, the bitter leaves of the fairy tale; the ultimate illusion of that awful Ape of God who is the lying master of illusion. Both Williams and Lewis show themselves great Miltonists in criticism as well as creation. Where Lewis' debt is to *Paradise Lost*, Williams' is more to *Comus*. Here, in the malevolent succubus, *Comus* and *Paradise Lost* converge. In its final imbecile decay and in the concept of Wentworth as its father and paramour alike, this part of *Descent Into Hell* owes much to Milton's allegorized Sin in Book II of *Paradise Lost*.

This faculty of allegorizing must be accounted at one and the same time Williams' greatest strength and greatest limitation. He pushes allegory to its outermost verge and perhaps beyond; but, like the Red Cross Knight, he always stays within the tournament lists of parable and never ventures out upon the ringing upland slopes of myth. To do his intentions justice, he does not desire such an end. But he is, nevertheless, in that same ratio a lesser creator than his mythopoeic associate, Dr. Lewis,

who owes to Williams so much more than Williams owes to him. He is more Protean, more elusive, more original than Lewis; and more difficult. But somehow, for all his marvellous originality, Williams' artistic avatar remains incomplete. Platonist that he is, he never bolts and shackles his marvels to Aristotelian actuality. His word never quite becomes flesh. His archetypal tree is always the Porphyrian Tree kindled into the Burning Bush by a contriver of fire-works for the Christian Emperor of Byzantium. It never grows into the true Hesperidean Oak that roots also in Dodona, Broceliande, Lob's Wood of Shakespeare and Barrie, and in Perelandra. His epiphanies burst into gorgeous ikon color; but never into dimensional relief. The great charger of his romances, even the ultimate Pegasus of *The Place of the Lion*, ramps and rears into life at a twist of the enchanter's pin. In the last analysis one does not feel under one's thighs, as one does in Lewis, the rippling muscles of the right *destrier*, the quintessential steed of romance.

But there are many compensations. When, at the climax of *Descent Into Hell*, Pauline Anstruther finds that she can assume her ancestor's fear and pain, thus linking together their respective aeivernities in simultaneous fellowship, William makes the same mighty suggestion Hopkins ventures on in *The Loss of the Eurydice*:

And the prayer thou hearest me making
Have, at the awful overtaking,
Heard; have heard and granted
Grace that day grace was wanted.

It is Williams' favorite dogma of atonement, of substituted love, of vicarious assumption and mystical communion. Pauline had earlier felt, at the time of the dress rehearsal: *All drew to its close; the dress rehearsal ended. Remained only the performance of the play*. It is *The Tempest's* lovely eucatastrophe. It was Williams' intensest conviction. His sense of paradisaal expectation hangs, on quivering ecstatic wings, all

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over his book; that and a firm belief that somewhere the great promise is fulfilled.

—CHARLES A. BRADY

Canisius College

Frost for Saint Brigid. By Sister Maris Stella. Sheed & Ward. \$1.75.

Sister Maris Stella's second book of poems (including many of her favorites that first appeared in the pages of *America*, *The Catholic World*, *The Sign*, *Spirit*, *The Wanderer*, and in *Here Only a Dove*) is substantial proof that the sonnet form is still malleable in our twentieth century. Out of seventy-five poems, fifty-four are sonnets, with fifty-two *à la* Shakespeare, one *à la* Petrarch, and one combination sonnet.

All bear the particular Sister Maris Stella trademark: no verse begins with a capital letter unless grammatical reasons demand it. But that is merely an external sign conveying nothing of the spirit of her poetry. If one were asked the outstanding quality of Sister Maris Stella's work, one might answer, with reason—fluidity. The run-on lines, the delicate use of alliteration and assonance, the simple and accurate and conversational language, all permeated with the grace of unheard music, combine to a unity invariably successful. This is an outstanding achievement in our time, that the fifty-two Shakespearean sonnets in this book read so effortlessly that one is scarcely aware that they are sonnets.

There is facility here, not in the sense that the majority of Merrill Moore's sonnets are facile, but in the sense of expertness. Granted that the verses are not tight and filled with tensions—the sort of thing one finds in Donne always and in Shakespeare often—still there is masterly control of the line, there is 'the achieve of' the thing which the reader even seems to share in the reading.

"The suave blasphemer at the lectern making / myth of mystery" and "What earth does every spring / is only a hint of

the thing" as well as "Do not be afraid. Oh, never be afraid, / though cities fall and all of us must die" are good lines not merely because they say what needs to be said and suggested, but because their tone is absolutely right. Whatever few lines there are that do not have wax in them, that lack sincerity, are rare: "Save us / from the mud and slime we gathered in the gloom / below," and "Be virtue in us Inspire, / instruct. Kindle in us, O love, this fire." Gathering mud and slime in darkness savors of overwrought symbolism, while four imperative verbs with an apostrophe for measure reeks rhetoric.

The deceptive facility which allows Sister Maris Stella a wide audience is by no means an invitation to comfortable, semi-conscious understanding. For the good lines are good because they were torn out of an artistic mind that concealed their art.

Though the subject matter of the poems is limited to religious and nature themes, with a few others devoted to youth, music, silence, pain, loneliness and fear, and one on Ireland and one on Mother, there is not one poem that is false, not one that is sentimental. Muriel Rukeyser asked recently where the children in poetry are. "The difficulty of dealing in art," she mentioned, "with the most common experiences shows itself in the thinness of our literature of childhood. Here is your universality, here is your common denominator, and the complexity of meanings, and the symbols of growth, promise, consciousness." They are certainly in de la Mare and in Blake, but to speak of our own time, she adds, "the poetry of childhood scarcely exists." Well, here are childhood poems of a first order in "Where These Flowers Grew," "I Who Had Been Afraid," "Under Their Dream," "Landscape with Children," "Old Man Harris," "Bay Violets," "Fairy Ring," and several more. Not one of them is precious, not one sentimental.

Frost for Saint Brigid may not be tortuous and complex, qualities which seem to appeal to our critics of ambivalence; it is,

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however, artful, genteel, and singularly lyrical, a credit to the well-balanced and mature woman who wrote it.

—ARTHUR MACGILLIVRAY, S.J.
Fairfield University

C. S. Lewis, *Apostle to the Skeptics*. By Chad Walsh. Macmillan. 1949. \$2.50.

Clive Staples Lewis is a stumbling block to the gentiles who man our secular universities. That he is a scholar, his *Allegory of Love*, a masterpiece of medieval studies, alone amply testifies. That he is a critic of penetrating insight, his *Rehabilitations*, *The Personal Heresy*, and especially *A Preface to Paradise Lost*, brilliantly manifest. But it is hard for those who take a narrow view of literary scholarship, to credit as well Lewis the fantasist, the apologist, the amateur theologian, pamphleteer, satirist, and even (though less successfully) poet. Like Swift and G. K. Chesterton, Lewis escapes from literary categories.

It remained for Chad Walsh, associate professor of English at Beloit College in Wisconsin, to essay the task of putting C. S. Lewis and his writings together in a book. Aided by a grant from his college, Mr. Walsh, in the summer of 1948, went to England to study his subject in his native habitat. He found a man of medium height, stocky build, a quick smile, sharp and rapid mind, plain and unselfconscious speech ("His books are more witty than his conversations"). A facile writer and a good listener, Lewis is inconspicuous at the University, though his lectures are "the best attended of any at Oxford."

A close friend to a few, a famous name to many, he moves among the familiar scenes of Oxford with the ease of long habit and the sureness of a man who knows what he is doing, whether walking to the pub, the lecture hall, or church.

Mr. Walsh is mainly interested in Lewis the religious writer, the "apostle to the skeptics," and he surveys this side of the man with skill and thoroughness, though

the present reviewer should like to have seen an even deeper inspection of Lewis' theology, and more research into Lewis' literary affinities.

We know from Lewis' own statements that he came to Christianity after a spell of youthful atheism through the reading of George MacDonald, then of G. K. Chesterton "and many other writers." Mr. Walsh well describes his double approach to religion, by way both of Reason and of Romanticism. Lewis is a constant defender of reason, and an amazingly keen reasoner himself, as his *Case for Christianity*, *Christian Behaviour*, *Beyond Personality* (originally B.B.C. radio talks), and *The Abolition of Man* (a gem of graceful and devastating dialectic) demonstrate. But he recognizes as well the affective-conative side of man, the "romantic." Mr. Walsh tells us:

Romanticism, as he uses the word, is an experience of intense longing, which differs from other desires in two ways: the yearning is in itself a sort of delight, and a peculiar mystery envelops the object of desire.

Here is St. Augustine's *desiderium*, which finds no rest save in God, and is therefore a living argument for man's supernatural end. As Lewis himself puts it in *Christian Behaviour*:

A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

Lewis is equally gifted as thinker and as myth-maker. His most sustained religious thinking thus far is to be found in the two books *The Problem of Pain* and *Miracles*. The myths are to be found at their wonderful best in the three fantasy-novels (*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *The Hideous Strength*), and in the Blakean *The Great Divorce* (which is really anti-Blake, anti-*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*). Lewis has not yet been given his due for these poetic-prophetic jewels of high imagi-

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nation, unapproached in recent writing, except by the less lucid myths of Kafka.*

Mr. Walsh's concluding remarks are in line with his special interest. He sees Lewis as a straw in the wind which is ushering in a revival of religion. There are, he says, two streams of religious thought now vital in England and America, eclectic mysticism and Christianity, and Lewis is on the side of "Classical" Christianity:

In any event, Classical Christianity is one of the strongest contenders in the desperate race to replace the discredited secularism now visibly going to pieces. Of all the writers advocating Classical Christianity, none combines versatility, literary skill, and psychological insight so richly as C. S. Lewis.

Mr. Lewis has found an able expositor and a sympathetic critic in Chad Walsh. Some day we shall, however, need another book on the man and his work, because he is still in mid-career (let us hope). Perhaps better than books on Lewis would be the reading of Lewis' book themselves. No one writing about them can do justice to their thought, imagination, and style. Lewis is, as Leonard Bacon called him some years ago, a new star in the literary firmament. Watchers of that sky should train their lenses on that star.

*The present reviewer can add a few details by way of correction to Mr. Walsh's interpretations. In a personal letter (dated Aug. 11, 1945) Mr. Lewis explains the meaning of 'Maleldil' (cf. *Perelandra*) as 'The Lord,' and indicates the plural of 'oyarsa' as 'oyeresu,' ("but you couldn't know that!" he added), and cautions against reading the history of Malacandra (cf. *Out of the Silent Planet*) as a guide to what *Perelandra* would become later on: "There is no real parallel. The Incarnation has come in between. Malacandra belongs to the old order in which planetary creatures were subjected to the angels; but the angels kneel before Tor. There is no limit to the future glories of the world which, needing no redemption itself, yet profits by the Incarnation."

—VICTOR M. HAMM

Marquette University

Four Poems by Rimbaud: The Problem of Translation. By Ben Belitt. Alan Swallow. \$1.75.

Mr. Belitt gives us here a scrupulous and complete example of the "twofold translation," a rendering which provides

the reader not only with a literal translation juxtaposed with the original text but then with a re-thinking and re-imagining of what these words represent into the permanence of a genuine poem. The second step is not a matter of improving upon a rough translation and giving a second thought to a word here and a construction there; it is an entrance into "the untranslatable factor itself," an address to the realities which yield the words we see on the page. Here no French-English glossary will help us. We need a poet's awareness—and Mr. Belitt is an accomplished poet—of another poet's awareness.

So difficult is this task that we have come to prefer that most people not try it. We would rather settle for a neat though prosaic little trot alongside the original language than see the unhappy poem flattened into somewhat tired rhymes or swollen into a rhetoric which nobody talks or writes in any country. Well, Mr. Belitt has taken this hard job and with the hardest material anyone could wish upon him—poetry of a stubbornly personal idiom and an unpredictable decorum. The four poems are "Les Poètes de Sept Ans," "Les Premières Communions," "Le Bateau Ivre," and "Mémoire." In one section you can find the original text and on the facing page the literal translation, which Mr. Belitt regards as incomplete because here one is simply finding the equivalents of words. In another section, the core of the book, you see the finished poem in English, grounded in what I might call the *ontology* of the original French.

Here is the first stanza of "Les Poètes de Sept Ans." First stage, Rimbaud's own words:

Et la Mère, fermant le livre du devoir,
S'en allait satisfaite et très fière, sans
voir,
Dans les yeux bleus et sous le front
plein d'éminences,
L'âme de son enfant livrée aux répug-
nances.

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And the literal translation:

And the Mother, closing the exercise-
book,
Went off satisfied and very proud, with-
out seeing
In the blue eyes and under the bulging
forehead
Her child's spirit given up to loathings.

And finally, the transmutation:

And puts the book by, and goes her
way, the Mother,
And flatters herself with an accom-
plished duty.
Revulsion shakes him; under the pim-
pled brow
The blue eyes deepen—no concern of
hers!

Why "Revulsion shakes him"? Look again at the French and you will see how the language holds itself in until it snarls out the word "répugnances." The sound of the initial "r" is much stronger, in this context, than a mere translation of the word (e.g., "loathings") could convey; and the last syllable of the word gets more weight because of the rhyme with "éminences," both by the device of echo and by the sense of inevitability fulfilled in the working out of the rhyme. Moreover the use of the contemptuous word "éminences" for pimples emphasizes the temporarily helpless and miserable position of the young poet, and, I think, the growing strangeness within him; and, again, the position of this word has a certain insistence. Now Mr. Belitt, working without rhyme and in a language with completely different resources, has to control all these effects; and so he strengthens the expression of the resentment itself. Because the resentment had been smoldering in the boy, in the original French, its expression would leave him shaken; and he might very well look for a moment after his mother and say to himself, "No concern of hers!" The justification for this attitude in the boy, Mr. Belitt permits us to see in the first line in the complacency of "And puts the book

by" and in the explicit words "and goes her way." In short, the translator here has found the central reality in this stanza—the boy-poet seething in the confinement of his provincial family—and he works at rendering this situation rather than the words with which Rimbaud expressed it.

So much to typify the method. There are a good number of passages much more brilliant in rendition and, of course, a few places not quite as good. It is only a compliment to Mr. Belitt that the reader wants to get into the business too, and so he worries a few of Mr. Belitt's choices. I worked a good long time myself over "No concern of hers," which seemed to me just the slightest bit weak. The alexandrine seems to raise the most trouble, because it is difficult to make the English syllable come out to a corresponding relationship (a mechanical repetition of the twelve syllables is, of course, out of the question in our language): one's sense of the everyday pronunciation of the words always, it seems to me, plays a counterpoint beneath the conventions of French prosody and declamation, and so there is always a gratuitous element of interest, which the poet in English has to work hard for in any meter and finds practically impossible beyond the ten-syllable line. It is not surprising, then, that some of the lines in "Les Premières Communions" get too heavy and obvious a music in English, sometimes for the greater part of a stanza. But again, I think, one mentions such problems only because Mr. Belitt's achievement with most of his material is so luminous that it excites us anew with the possibilities of translation—no matter how badly and tediously we ourselves have failed in earlier trials with it. These are the best translations I have seen of Rimbaud's verse, and now that they exist they are indispensable to any close study of Rimbaud in this country.

—HENRY RAGO

University of Chicago

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Maurice Baring: A Postscript. By Laura Lovat. Sheed and Ward. \$2.00.

Unpretentiously and accurately, Laura Lovat has subtitled her little book on Maurice Baring "A Postscript." It makes no pretension of superseding Dame Ethel Smyth's *Maurice Baring* published in 1938. Rather it supplements it by bridging the years between that date and Baring's death in 1945. The small but select band of admirers of Maurice Baring will welcome it as helping to complete the record.

Dame Ethel Smyth's much longer book was not a critical study or even a full-fledged biography so much as a commentary on his work by a friend and frank admirer. What it lacked in critical discrimination it made up by devotion and enthusiasm. She included as well a large section devoted to letters and correspondence.

It is almost true to say that there is no need for a life of Baring, for in different ways he wrote his own biography for us. His *Puppet Show of Memory* told better than another could his own story down to 1914, and such volumes as *Round the World in Any Number of Days* and *Lost Lectures* are largely autobiographical.

That he himself did not continue in any formal way the relation of his life beyond 1914 is undoubtedly a loss, and yet it remains true that in a certain sense all his numerous books are autobiographical. This is especially true of the dozen novels which he wrote from 1921 onward, for in them one sees him dealing always with the life he knew best: that aristocratic, cultivated, cosmopolitan Jamesian world which was finally to pass with his own passing. One critic has aptly remarked on the tendency of all his novels to become memoirs, that all of them waver between the novel of imagination and the novel of autobiography.

Yet in these very novels there is a reserve and a reticence which was completely characteristic of him. He was a man of unique culture and an ingrained horror of

italics and over-statement—"pudique réserve" as one admirer called it. One recalls his very terse reference to his conversion in *The Puppet Show of Memory*: "On the eve of Candlemas, 1909, I was received into the Catholic Church by Father Sebastian Bowden at the Brompton Oratory: the only action in my life which I am quite certain I have never regretted."

This very reserve and restraint is a quality which gives his novels, in spite of the fact that they are concerned with the psychological and interior life of his characters, an objectivity which prevents him from intrusively passing judgments on his characters and saves him from confusing art and polemic. "It is bad art to point the moral, to nudge the reader's elbow," as he said in the preface to *Car's Cradle*; "the moral should be self-evident and proceed from the nature of the work." He did not label things, and this is probably why Mauriac could say to Robert Speaight: "What I most admire about Baring's work is the sense he gives you of the penetration of grace." This, I think, is for us the central importance of the work of Baring.

Like Dame Ethel Smyth's book, Lady Lovat's is also a labor of love rather than a rigorously critical study. Her gracious and mellow memoir—the first thirty-five pages of her book—tells us of the last years of his life. He had published his final book, *Have You Anything to Declare* in 1936 and shortly after that was afflicted with physical suffering which ended only with his death in 1945. In 1940 he left Half-Way House at Rottingdean and spent the closing five years of his life at the home of Lady Lovat in Scotland. She tells gracefully and intimately of this period when he lived with an interior fierce intensity and at the same time an almost complete detachment from his own great suffering as he watched, through the war years, the end of civilization as his generation had known it.

The memoir is followed by a section devoted to a rather varied collection of his

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letters. Oddly enough only a few represent the years from 1938 to 1945, and indeed many were written at the turn of the century. They help to supplement those presented by Dame Ethel Smyth though there must be many more letters which have not yet found their way into print. The letters are very uneven in quality, but some of them are genuinely memorable (for instance, the one on the first night of *L'Aiglon*, another starting "Yesterday morning I went to see Anatole France again in his mediaeval cell," another on Wagner and Swinburne). Here are letters to Vernon Lee (Miss Paget), Hilaire Belloc (these sometimes become verse-letters), André Maurois, Abbé Mugnier; included also are letters to less well-known correspondents. For the benefit of those not of the Baring coterie it would have been helpful if Lady Lovat had identified them.

Twenty-five pages of his verses are printed. Because Baring is probably far better as a translator than as a poet in his own right, it is especially fortunate that a few of his translations are included.

Two critiques by other hands conclude the volume: Ronald Knox contributes a little essay on the effect of the classics on Baring, and Princess Marthe Bibesco a preface which she had just written for the French translation of Baring's first novel, *Passing By*. It has been in France—where such people as Du Bos and Marcel have been great admirers—rather than in the English-speaking world that Baring has perhaps been most appreciated, and it is therefore particularly fitting that this preface should bring the volume to a close. As Princess Marthe Bibesco says: "On a dit très justement de Maurice Baring que la vie n'était jamais devenue pour lui une habitude, qu'elle était toujours restée un miracle, et ce fut vrai, jusqu'à la fin."

Lady Lovat's *Postscript* is only 116 pages long, and it is something of a miscellany, but lovers of Maurice Baring will be grateful to her for bringing together this tribute. They will hope, too, that some day a full

critical evaluation of his final achievement will be written.

—JOHN PICK

Marquette University

France Pagan? By Maisie Ward. Sheed and Ward. \$3.00.

France Pagan? is a very important book. It contains perhaps the most important document of post-war Catholic France, Henri Godin's *France, Pays de Mission*.

Godin's book acted as the wellspring of a whole flood of interest and work for the Catholic Revival. The unsystematic yet penetrating observations of a priest with long experience in worker's Catholic Action and a sociologist to boot, *France, Pays de Mission* shocked Catholic France into a realization of its own de-Christianization, and to the challenge of hundreds of thousands of proletarians for whom "Church" means a building, and "Christ" is a mild swear word. But *France Pays de Mission* is more importantly the testimony of Henri Godin, the man who more than anyone incarnates the Catholic Revival.

Briefly, Godin sees that France has been slipping at an ever accelerated pace towards complete de-Christianization. Certain strata of society are already pagan: in their reactions, their values and their environment. The proletariat not only has been neglected by the Church for generations, but has inherited a psychological block against all things Christian because of the historical alliance of Church and Crown, then Church and Property. This has made the perseverance of a converted proletarian demand either his leaving his class or else heroic perseverance in an alien world.

Godin realizes the difficulty of evangelizing such a milieu. He diagnoses the milieu as pagan and recommends missionary techniques: maximum adaptation of the missionary, the concentration on building a Christian community and not just on individual conversions, the absolute necessity

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of purifying Christ's doctrine from any trace of bourgeois culture, and preaching Christ, not bourgeois manners, standards of ideals.

The key to the re-Christianization of France according to Godin is the building of *real* Christian communities, living a profound, warm life of love, sharing the same liturgy, communities in the shop, in the worker's housing project, in the classes at night school, in the unions. "Christian action everywhere corresponding with life as it is being lived, moulded upon its shapes, built up with a missionary outlook, made to a missionary design."

Mrs. Sheed in the first part of *France Pagan?* has given a short sketch of Henri Godin's life with precious excerpts from his diary, particularly the litany to Our Lady beginning: "From being a bourgeois priest, deliver me, Mary."

I cannot help but think that the chapter "An Author?" misses the point of Godin completely. Frankly, who cares if Godin was an author in any literary sense of the word? One feels rather as a Corinthian who having just received a letter from St. Paul, was asked to speak on St. Paul's place in Modern Literature. It is not that Godin does not have a place, it is that *that* question be asked when Godin, the apostle, is still unknown. Who cares that he misspelled words, or wrote illegibly on scraps of paper? What is important is that Godin lived, and living spoke to his workers, prayed with them, planned with them, died for them.

Mrs. Sheed has rearranged Godin's book thinking: "Clearly, if the book were to carry its message some omissions and adaptations had to be made." For those who shudder (as I did until I read the translation) at this manhandling of so precious a text, I can reassure them. After careful checking, I do not find anything important left out. I can hardly think it an improvement on the original, but it is not a mutilation.

In her third section, Mrs. Sheed adds a very useful note on the Mission de Paris, and some sizeable chunks from Father Loewe's book *En Mission Proletarienne* dealing with the Marseilles mission. She has also voiced most of the doubts surrounding the Mission de Paris: the danger of a secular messianism; the problem of a bourgeois Church; the canonization of the working class and the excommunication of the bourgeoisie; the fear that the Catholic Movement be submerged in the worker's movement; the attraction of Communism; the debasement of culture; the problem of the mission parish as a parish.

I think that while Mrs. Sheed comes down on the side of the angels, she does have qualms about the anti-bourgeois aspect of the mission, about the danger of politics for the French Church. Having shared these same qualms, I can only say that the more one investigates the Mission, the more one tries to share the life of those at Montreuil, the more one is convinced of the absolute primacy of charity, of Christ. No one is more aware of the dangers of the Mission than the Abbé Holland who is its ecclesiastical superior. The Mission is strong in being only part, although an important one, of a whole movement stemming from the Mission de France at Lisieux (which exists at the direct request of the Council of Cardinals and Archbishops of France) and which is shared by every major religious order in France (Jesuit, Dominican, Franciscan and Benedictine).

France Pagan? is a labor of love. Obviously an enormous amount of work has gone into it. Mrs. Sheed has unquestionably done a piece of research well up to her usual standards. She is to be congratulated for having the spiritual insight of recognizing *France, Pays de Mission* as the very great book it is, and for the perseverance in bringing it to the English-speaking world.

—S. W. CASSIDY

Loyola University

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The Happy Tree. By Sheila Kaye-Smith
Fry. Harper. \$3.00.

Sheila Kaye-Smith knows a good story, and she understands how to tell it tellingly. In *The Happy Tree* she has lived up to her past reputation. *The Happy Tree* is the emotional saga of a young Sussex farmer, Kemp Silverden. He is an inarticulate lover of beauty, a sterling example of commonsense. Yet, as the story opens, the sterling comes unpegged. Kemp, a recent widower, falls in love with Alice Candelin, the wife of a neighboring farmer whose characterization is fabricated much in the same style as an oleograph portrait of Eric Gill.

Alice possesses all the *la belle dame sans merci* atmosphere which attracts the moody Kemp. In the opening chapters of the novel the reader learns that Candelin, is planning to sell his Sussex farm. He makes an extended sortie into Lincolnshire for the purpose of looking at some new and richer farmland. His absence from home sets the scene for the inevitable scampering mice.

A chance meeting between Kemp and Alice, retailed with unromantic realism, warms to a scene of Keats-spangled romance in the archaic kitchen of the Candelin home. Outside the glowing walls of the tasteful room the snow falls and falls, like stars falling on the heart. With the potent assistance of some mulled ale, the resourceful Alice seems on the point of precipitating herself into a summer adultery. Kemp looks forward to the future possession of his lady, "while visions of sugar-plums dance in his head." But Sheila-Kaye Smith is much more resourceful than that.

In the midst of a blinding snowstorm next day, Alice comes to tell Kemp the whole *amour* has been a mistake. Her first duty, she plausibly insists, is to her husband and her two boys. On her return journey to the Candelin farm Alice twists her ankle in a gopher hole. Kemp finds her and carries her tenderly to his own house.

Then, during five days of continued snow, he pours out his poetic adoration in the delights of serving Alice. All the proprieties are observed. The doctor comes to call, and ultimately the district nurse. In the absence of Kemp's charlady, Rose the pub-keeper's daughter (also in love with Kemp) drops in during the day to do for her young man. The villagers accept the quaint situation without sniggers. Except for some transitory toying with "the darling hand of Alice," the five days pass in a Darby and Joan atmosphere of perfect propriety and Keatsian nostalgia.

Outside the wind roars, the snow blots out the world with stars, then turns it into a prismatic fairyland of ice. The time faints away while Kemp's beloved initiates him into the mysteries of interior decorating in the modern manner and the dubious delights of French omelets and cheese fondue. The swelling in Alice's foot finally subsides and she returns to her own home. Her husband reappears on the scene within a day or two. Alice gives him a lying account of her injury and the ensuing events of the five days spent in Kemp's house. The fatuous Candelin learns the truth by chance in the village and, quite naturally, concludes that Alice and Kemp are guilty of adultery. There is a final scene, at the Candelin farm, in which the guilt of Kemp and Alice seems all the more obvious as Alice continues her lies and good, old, honest Kemp blurts out the truth. Kemp's Venetian glass conception of Alice is rudely shattered. After all, what could be expected of a woman who lived on omelets and cheese fondue?

The Candelins depart for the new farm, leaving the field clear for the homely Rose, the pub-keeper's daughter. Faced with a choice between French omelets and cheese fondue, contrasted with steak smothered in onions and leg of pork with dressing, what Sussex farmer would fail to choose the better part?

Cakes and ale and simple things
Win over omelets and the joys of kings.

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The story is retailed much in the manner of Puvis de Chavannes. The low tones are skillfully laid on. The descriptions have distinction. The people in the story are not mere descriptive ikons without perspective or genuine human dimensions: they build themselves up in word and action throughout the skillful unfolding of the plot. Mrs. Fry is tender with humanity; she is thorough as well. Her minor characters receive the same loving attention which she devotes to the principal actors in the scene. Only once, to my knowledge, does Sheila nod, when she makes the unread Kemp say of Alice: "The tears in her eyes seemed hard and bright like ice—ice tears on a snow face, and his snow queen going away in the snow." This fairy tale observation is quite in keeping with the author of *Kitchen Fugue*, but totally out of keeping with the background or psychology of Kemp.

In her "speculation on the human heart" Mrs. Fry's approach is not altitudinous. Propriety is served and observed. No moral person, in the narrow sense of that term, could find in *The Happy Tree* the shadowiest hint which might shock the bourgeois or engender a delicious *frisson* in the breast of a snow maiden. Yet for all that Grundy surface, sentimental and moral values are frequently confused. And if sin does not actually appear in the disguise of beauty, there is only the breadth of an angel's eyelash between the situations Mrs. Fry exposes and Maritain's murderer that walks the world in the guise of an angel. The god behind the story in *The Happy Tree* is the god of aesthetics and sentimentality, of lace valentines and courtly love, not the God of Jacob and Isaac, or the "Brazen Face" of Thomas Merton. A world of beefsteak pies and homespun simplicities retailed with the abundant good taste native to Sheila Kaye-Smith is also light-years removed from that wounded and agonizing universe in which Mauriac moves or Graham Greene. Mrs. Fry has failed to open a window into man; she has failed

to see the universe "through and through"; she has, however, constructed a clever escape-hatch. The words of Shakespeare might well be applied in judgment of the book's story value: "It's not deep as a well or wide as a barn door, but 'twill do."

The story suggested many things to me. Its atmosphere and method called up the simplicity and understatement of *Adam Bede*. It had, too, some of the morose delectation and tension of *The Virgin and the Gypsy*, without the justification of D. H. Lawrence's mystique of sex. It also smacked of Berta Ruck's involved and proprietous titillations, but there is dignity in Mrs. Fry's prose instead of the verbal treacle characteristic of *la Ruck*.

Last of all, *The Happy Tree* recalled to memory the story told of the Frenchman, who was visiting New York for the first time. When he was shown the Empire State building he said it reminded him of sex. Asked for a reason and pressed for an answer, the Frenchman replied, "Everything did."

—FRANCIS BAUCHESNE THORNTON

The Waters of Siloe. By Thomas Merton. Harcourt, Brace. \$3.50.

In *The Waters of Siloe* Thomas Merton, turned chronicler and historian, relates the story of the rise, decline and renovation of the Cistercian Order. The curiosity about the Cistercians that was aroused by his autobiography is here satisfied in the very readable American that Father Louis writes.

The bulk of the book is divided into two main parts. There are, however, several short sections, each interesting in itself, which taken together form a frame of reference. The organization is tidy and the effect is to give the general reader quite a complete picture of Cistercian life, its history and its meaning for the world today. At the same time the reader with particular interests will find this a valuable source.

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The shorter sections deserve some comment in themselves.

The daily routine of the modern Cistercian is set down hour by hour for both winter and summer. People who wonder what the monks do with themselves will peruse the schedule with interest.

Then there's a meaty prologue, replete with annotated quotations. Quarrying the quote from William of St. Thierry on page xx opens up vistas to that happy land where man's will is fully free simply because he can no longer will the non-reality of sin. The footnote on the precise meaning of *puritas cordis* is a gem sparkling, throwing back light on light. Writers such as Melville and Hawthorne would have revelled in its exposure of depths. "But vain to popularize profundities, and all truth is profound," wrote Melville in *Moby Dick*. Merton gives pause to the quick assent.

The prologue is followed by a note on the function of a contemplative order. This note is a clear and simple statement of just what a contemplative order is and in what its apostolate consists. Says Merton: "... the contemplation of God in silence and detachment from all things—is, for a Cistercian, the supreme apostolate." This theme runs like blood through the book and the reader becomes so convinced of its truth that he realizes that what he is reading could not have been written so well and forcefully if it were not so. The press rumor of this past August to the effect that the Pope is seriously considering activating the contemplative orders endows the few pages of this note with a significance probably not dreamt of by the author when he wrote the lines.

After the main body of the work, which follows the note mentioned above, there is a bibliography. The list of books is as rare as a Trappist and only a Trappist would have access to some of them. There's nothing startling about that fact, but savor these few entries chosen at random: *Caesarii Heisterbacensis, Dialogus Miraculo-*

rum, 2 vols. Coloniae, 1851. *Dialogus inter Cluniacensem Monachum et Cisterciensem*, in *Mariène et Durand, Thesaurus Novus Anecdotorum*, Vol. V. Col., 1571. *Cistercienser Chronik*, Bregenz, 1899 ff. Of course there are also St. Bernard, *Omnia Opera*; St. Aelred, *Opera*; St. John of the Cross, his works in the Peers translation; William of St. Thierry.

Father Louis next provides a glossary of monastic terms which is an absolute need for a book of this kind. Here you can find out what a father immediate is, a grange, a hebdomadary, a laxist, an ambo. As for a miter, the reader is told: "Ceremonial headdress of bishops and abbots. The average dictionary will endeavor to show you what a miter looks like."

Finally there is an index built around proper names but if you want to check on the use of snuff at Gethsemani you'll find an entry for that too.

As previously noted, the main body of the text is divided into two parts, the first and larger of which is mostly factual and the second interpretative.

In the first part the founding of the Cistercian order is outlined, the internal reason for its decay toward the end of the twelfth century is indicated, together with the external corruptions that accompanied the decline, and the story is taken up in detail with the rise of De Rancé in the middle of the seventeenth century.

The penitential character of De Rancé, whose name has become so closely identified with the Trappists, is clearly set forth and the fact that he was not a contemplative in the real sense of that word is underscored. He is recognized for what he did to restore the Order: "the abbot . . . who was to deliver the Cistercians from the threat of final and irreparable corruption and bring the Order from the edge of the grave back to life and health." At the same time, the author makes it abundantly clear that De Rancé is not his ideal either as monk or abbot. De Rancé, it would appear, was a strong dose of nauseous

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medicine to be administered to a very sick patient. Penance for the sake of penance, humiliation for the sake of humiliation, tears for the sake of tears have no place in Merton's conception of what true contemplation is.

The Cistercians in North America, the meagre beginnings, the struggle for survival and occasional failures, the establishment of abbeys and their latter day development as bastions of contemplation are given complete treatment. On the same loom the oceans of the world are crossed and recrossed and the history of the Old World foundations is interwoven with that of the Asiatic monasteries and the Cistercian failures in tropical countries.

What could have been a dull recital is enlivened with such typical Mertonian conversation as: "When the first postwar General Chapter of the Order convened at Cîteaux in May, 1946, Dom Frederic flew the Atlantic with a paper in his pocket that asked the fathers to make the Georgia monastery an independent abbey." The phrase "with a paper in his pocket" is part of the twist that pretty generally turns what Merton writes into something that people are willing to read. An overlay of the stuff from which Merton made poetry in his earlier days lingers too—there are outcroppings in sentences such as: "Loud with waterfalls, the abrupt, jagged hills were wounded by ravines." This of a monastery site in North China.

In this section there is an abundance of straight information. How many know, for example, that Trappists once lived on the properties now occupied by St. Patrick's Cathedral and Rockefeller Center in New York City?

Merton has an eye for human interest stories too. There are glimpses of characters in concrete detail who have every right to be dipped in the amber of short story or novel. There was the begging monk out of Gethsemani who ended up in Montevideo, Uruguay, and the Trappist who fled a monastery on his first day be-

cause he observed a choir monk brushing a fly from his shaven head—such a house of corruption was not for him. Then there was the self-styled ex-Trappist who detailed in a pamphlet his imprisonment at Gethsemani and who ended his days in an insane asylum. Joseph Dutton, of Molokai fame, was once a monk at Gethsemani.

The persecutions of the monks in France, during the revolution and during the wave of anti-clericalism of the early twentieth century, make fascinating reading. What happened during the two World Wars and the accounts of the contemporaneous martyrs in Spain and China read like news stories fresh off the press association wires.

This first part of the book sets forth the facts impartially and provides an extensive background for the interpretation of the second part.

It is in the revealing of meaning that Merton excels and the final three chapters in themselves are worth the price of admission. His chapter entitled "Cistercian Life in the Twelfth Century" provides an easy transition from external practices to the one essential principle of true contemplation. Here the reader is taken by the hand and guided through the reasons that resulted in the Cistercian architecture of the twelfth century. Each physical part of the monastery is shown to have its spiritual analogue, each its own function and the beauty of the whole not superimposed but growing out of a psychosomatic relationship of the whole man wholly devoted to God.

The daily life of the monks of the twelfth century is minutely analyzed and the natural rhythms of their days, seasons of the year and the liturgical cycle are fully explicated. The design is richly detailed and the rising arch is found dependent on the keystone of the Incarnation—Christ as the center, Christ radiating, Christ catching up in the fire of His love the souls of men. It is precisely this Incarnational approach, the approach of God

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made Man that men may be made as God, that is the catalyst. The life so subsumed to glory is that of E. I. Watkins' fusion of the vertical drive upward from the depths of the soul to God and the horizontal drive outward to all men, it is the concrete realization of Maritain's affirmation of the possibility of an heroic humanism, it is the Dantean "world that never mankind hath possessed," the supreme development of the whole personality of the individual in Christ and at the same moment of his embracing his fellow men as other Christs. It is the answer to the triple problem of God, the ego and other men.

The second of these three interpretative chapters is called "Cistercian Character and Sanctity." Here the shift of emphasis from severity for its own sake to the love of God for His own sake is traced by examination of the trials of Trappists. Merton bends over backwards in being fair to De Rancé and he shows understanding without sympathy of the Val Sainte regulations of Dom Augustin de Lestrange. The work and writings of Dom Vital Lehodey are given full recognition for implementing the genuine interior life of the twentieth century Trappists. The sufferings of people who were directed by superiors ignorant of what was happening within their souls is so clearly set forth that readers who will never be so troubled will at least be able to sympathize.

Father Louis has a way of rising in his last chapter. The colloquy that ends *The Seven Storey Mountain* cannot easily be forgotten; in the finale of *Seeds of Contemplation* he soared out of sight. In *The Waters of Siloe* the summation is quieter in mood. The final analysis and synthesis is a fine example of exposition in Merton's homeland of ultimates and in this instance is the more effective for being subdued. The powerful affirmative thrust that has marked Merton's writing right from *Thirty Poems* of 1943 has not here been

blunted (much less self-expended) but rather it operates on a deeper level of charity. The doctrine that can only be called "detachment even from detachment for the sake of detachment" here bears fruit in the calm objective statement: ". . . the fraternal charity of the contemplative seeks a union with other men . . . a union in which all souls are fused into one—into the soul of the Mystical Christ, in Whom they all become one Person." This represents a subtle shift of emphasis within the same position stated in *Seeds of Contemplation* (completed four and a half months prior to the present work): "The ultimate perfection of the contemplative life is not a heaven of separate individuals, each one viewing his own private vision of God: it is a sea of Love which flows through the One Person of all the elect, all the angels and saints, and their contemplation would be incomplete if it were not shared, or if it were shared with fewer souls, or with spirits capable of less vision and less joy." The movement indicated in the later book, then, is of a piece with what had previously been written in *Seeds* but the effect is upon achievement of an ideal in itself supremely worthy rather than upon the results of that achievement in terms of individuals however closely united in love. Merton would doubtless smile broadly at the more or less academic distinction but his advance is clearly marked and the fulfillment of his own prophecy a little closer: "And when you have been praised a little and loved a little I will take away all your gifts and all your love and all your praise and you will be utterly forgotten and abandoned and you will be nothing, a dead thing, a rejection."

And so the waters here flow deeper: "These are the Waters of Siloe, that flow in silence." For the present it is enough to praise him rather highly and love him very much.

—GEORGE A. MCCAULIFF

BOOK REVIEWS

The Life and Times of Coventry Patmore.

By Derek Patmore. Constable. 15s.

Decade by decade the work of reassessing the Victorians goes on. This will probably be necessary for some time. As perspective becomes greater the critic may expect to arrive at a more objective revaluation of the intrinsic importance of Victorian poetry; and as more documents are made available the biographer will be able to give a more complete portrait, one in which all the lights and shades of actuality are present. That this process should sometimes mean the iconoclastic type of biography is, of course, unfortunate, because that is often as distorted as the uncritical panegyric. But it also means that eventually the entire portrait may be brought into focus.

Coventry Patmore is a man so full of contradictions—though almost all of them are more apparent than real—that it will undoubtedly be long before a final definitive biography will emerge.

The "official life" appeared in 1900, only four years after his death, in the form of two monumental volumes by Basil Champneys entitled *Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore*. It remains a mine of rich source material, though its interpretive side has weaknesses. Champneys was supplied with most of the necessary documents by the surviving widow, Patmore's third wife, whose "devoted foresight during her husband's life, and indefatigable industry then and after" the biographer graciously acknowledged. He apparently suppressed deliberately certain details about the last years of Patmore's life for fear of offending the last Mrs. Patmore, and he omitted an occasional letter showing the less flattering side of Patmore's character.

In 1935, thirty-five years later, the great-grandson of Patmore, Derek Patmore, published his rather garrulous *Portrait of My Family* which all students of Patmore

know. It is not merely biographical on the one hand nor critical on the other, and it by no means supersedes the fuller *Memoirs and Correspondence* by Champneys, although it does throw some fresh lights on the life and character of Patmore.

Now it appears that Derek Patmore himself consciously suppressed a few further revelations and by the simple expedient of changing the title of his book from *Portrait of My Family* to *The Life and Times of Coventry Patmore* he has introduced some new details. It would be quibbling to quarrel about the change in the title; the important things are whatever is changed or new in the later volume.

Derek Patmore's justification for his revised study of his grandfather is that the passage of time has removed the last family barrier. The poet's only surviving son, Captain Francis Patmore, who was still living when *Portrait of My Family* appeared, died, and this has permitted Derek Patmore to reveal important facts about the mother of Captain Francis, Harriet Patmore the third wife of the poet—facts which Derek concealed for fear of wounding the only surviving son during his lifetime.

One of the principal changes is, therefore, a less favorable portrait of Patmore's third wife, Harriet Robson Patmore, who is presented as something of a Becky Sharp, angling for Coventry Patmore's affection while his second wife was still living. The biographer sees "a hardness beneath the well-staged charm. This woman had triumphed, but she had paid the price for supplanting another. As Mrs. Coventry Patmore she had inherited all his money, possessions and fame, but in the last years of the poet's life she had known but never admitted that he loved another woman."

The Marchioness of Crewe allowed Derek Patmore to consult the Houghton Papers, and this makes it possible for him to solve a large part of the mystery surrounding Coventry Patmore's treatment of

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his eldest son, Milnes, and their estrangement.

One revelation will come as something of a shock, and since it is certain to be pounced on by critics and reviewers it must be mentioned. Says the great-grandson: "Hidden away behind the shelves in the library at Heron's Ghyll was a complete set of the privately printed books of the Eroticon Biblion Society—reprints of the forbidden masterpieces of the world's erotic literature." Such a fact is open to the grossest kind of misinterpretation unless one sees it in relation to a very persistent strain in Patmore's thinking: that pagan myths, the stories not only of Eros and Psyche but of Bacchus or Venus, contain a parallel and a prefiguration, distorted as they often may be, of Christian doctrines and symbols. That there were dangers in this way of thinking is undoubtedly true, but as one views the total thought of Patmore one sees that always he was endeavoring to separate the gold from the dross in pagan myth and symbol.

There is introduced in full a very important letter from Gerard Manley Hopkins which had been printed only in part by Champneys, throwing very new light on Hopkins' reasons for considering as indiscreet *Sponsa Dei*, that famous manuscript which Patmore destroyed.

The volume is enhanced by the inclusion of a number of memorable family pictures and portraits which are now fortunately available to a wider public.

The revisions and additional materials in Derek Patmore's book will not change in any essential way our picture of Patmore, but they do add a highlight here, a shade there. These new materials still must be brought into relation to the general outlines of the portrait of Patmore, and this is a very subtle and difficult task—one that eventually eludes even the poet's great-grandson.

—JOHN PICK

Marquette University

The Young McDermott. By Edward McSorley. Harper. \$3.00 & *The Edge of Doom*. By Leo Brady. Dutton. \$3.00.

The novel, Ortega y Gasset holds, has entered what the economists sometimes call the "mature" state. Its avenues of possible experimentation have all been explored; cultivation, with decreasing returns, is the genre's remaining occupation. For today's novelist "the given" is a restricted thing: "a vast but finite quarry." In this late period there will be writing of surpassing technical quality and a perceptiveness of character depiction which will go far beyond the achievements of the classic period of the form, even to the point of making its master works unreadable, because obtuse in style and psychology. The golden age of the genre, in effect, is over. Still, "The decline of an artistic genre, like that of a race, affects but the average specimens." What Señor Ortega y Gasset observes of the genre applies, it is obvious enough, with equal force to the work of the individual novelist. In the democratization of the sensibilities, it seems, the minor writer of today is the peer of the giants of the past.

Because of the fact that, certainly historically, and some would say integrally, the novel is a Protestant art form, the Catholic novel—or the novel of Catholic material—has a longer life expectancy, especially in English, than any other. It has few classics; it has a slender history of technical proficiency. Its vein is not run out. The death of naturalism, now everywhere admitted (although each publishing season throws up a few lively corpses), gives the Catholic-centered novel its first chance for a hearing; and supply has been responsive to demand. Part of this supply has been from professional writers who, as the phrase goes, "happen to be" Catholics; and who, Catholic or not, more importantly happen to be writers. One need not agree with Brownson that they "constitute one of the greatest pests of modern society" to conclude that the

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still unsolved problem of definition of the Catholic novel is not likely to receive solution from the professionals.

Nor will it come from the polemicists. Each is using the novel as vehicle; the one subtly, the other crudely. The professional, the man who has the achieve of, the mastery, may yet be employing Catholic material as the accidents, so to speak, of a substance whose inner laws are quite other. The mere propagandizer is often like the savage who happens upon a piece of modern machinery and insensitively incorporates it into his (otherwise unchanged) culture pattern. But is there, apart from the question of subject matter—whether used with artistry or with crasser insistence—such a thing as the Catholic novel? Is there, to come at once to the heart of the matter, that thing which may not inappropriately be considered a Catholic form? (For the problem is intimately one of form.)

The work of François Mauriac persuades that there is. It has not been sufficiently remarked that Mauriac has created a form for his novels which is itself metaphor and idiom of his affirmation. Specifically, he employs the devices of scene and of time as controls. With Mauriac, art is aware of, if not directed by, prudence. By holding scene at arm's length—say, by exemplifying moderate realism in describing a scene of passion—Mauriac is doing more than practicing "propriety." He is refusing to allow material, the quantitative, to rule the qualitative. Again, because he sees time *sub specie aeternitatis* (and that not "piously" but formally) he seizes upon time as a quality of action rather than as duration. Thus he can write convincingly of conversion; he avoids the *stages* (time-measured) of soul to capture those moments of illumination which seem to occur outside time, outside becoming. In this purposive—one may say classical—use of form, rather than in the Bordeaux backgrounds, Mauriac is the Catholic novelist *par excellence*.

The very structure of the Catholic novel, then, will be not one of decoration (in the sense of architectural afterthought that Eric Gill so vehemently denounced) nor again one of devout proclamation. It will be one whose form directs the relationships of character, scene, and action in an organization of experience. Preeminently, it is one which does not follow the organization imposed by material causes; it will not, therefore, be what we usually consider "romantic." If such a theory be admitted, it is amusing to consider that Bloy's *The Woman Who Was Poor*—insofar, indeed, as it is a novel—is a Protestant novel. Again, Waugh's *Vile Bodies* and *A Handful of Dust* are more Catholic than is *Brideshead Revisited*. And to be relentless about the thing, what should we say of Graham Greene except, perhaps, that his first Catholic novel is before him.

In *The Young McDermott* and *The Edge of Doom* we have two recent novels which deliberately exploit Catholic material. Neither is an independent work in the sense that it has been fashioned by a person speaking surely in his own idiom. Edward McSorley is imitating the author of *Our Own Kind*, that is to say an earlier self; and *The Edge of Doom*, Leo Brady's first novel, is, elaborately, an imitation of Graham Greene. Each book is engaging and readable on its own account—though neither demands to be read—and each is significant as an example of what the novel of Catholic material may become.

Our Own Kind, Mr. McSorley's first novel, is the story of the boyhood of an Irish-American Catholic in a New England city. The city is Providence, Rhode Island; and much of the effect of the book comes from the contrast afforded by the author's naming Providence names (of streets and churches and the like) along with his treatment of the lyrical, folk background of the McDermott family, particularly of the boy's grandfather. Two worlds, starkly separate and yet required to exist side by side, are given life. *The Young Mc-*

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Dermott is a sequel to the earlier book; the grandfather is dead, and Willie McDermott is a young man, about to find his first job. The authentic city is present in this book too: parish names, the city's Federal and Smith hills, a gangster episode borrowed from the middle 'thirties and placed in the 'twenties. The authentic Irish are here also—keening or tale-telling in the background. But the charm and the rightness are gone. The folk world which surrounded the boy has yielded not to an adult world but a dream. Young Willie works on a Providence newspaper, is fired for his "liberal" views, ships on a freighter, is "beached" in Hamburg, and returns home. What happened to the growing boy was communal; young Willie's experience is private and pretty nearly incommunicable—he is lonely as Bernard Clare.

The point is not at all that what happens to Willie in the first book is on the whole pleasant, and in the second mostly unpleasant. The point is that the background is integral in *Our Own Kind*; in the sequel it is fortuitous. The point is that, in however sentimentalized fashion, the earlier book reflects life; in the sequel life and the dream are confused—the material imposes itself on the form. An important sequence in *The Young McDermott* is given us in such a way that only several pages later do we discover that its events are meant to be real, and not the record of our privileged insight into Willie's subconscious. The atomization of Willie's world (and the critical point is that the novelist's world, the one it is his function to control, is also atomized) is, by the end, complete. The determined transition from private guilt to mass guilt has been made, but the long harangues (not artistically imitated, but lifted right onto these pages) of canny, famous-tongued Irishmen lead exactly nowhere. And everywhere the sawdust . . . not the main tent, either, but of the side show.

To pass from the loose (yet at times effectively loose) organization of *The Young McDermott* to the tight world of *The Edge of Doom* is to experience once again the variety of which the novel is capable. The mood and the technique of this novel exist by virtue of the previous existence of *Brighton Rock*. Its Pinkie is Martin Lynn, a young man in mean circumstances who murders a priest out of rage and "the tension in his stomach." How he is brought down by the "film inside his head" and by the *realia* external to and yet of the stuff of conscience is the story. Waugh says of Greene that he is a good scenarist; the playwright in Brady is everywhere apparent; his effects, though never cheap, are surely mechanical. There is some clumsy writing, an occasional cliché. Ineptness aside, the only disconcerting note is the attributing to the protagonist thoughts and reflections which are obviously, as with Greene, part of the author's bloodstream. Greene's accent and method permeate *The Edge of Doom*, as in the following:

"J. T. Murray & Son, Thoughtful Service" the green neon lights arched out over the sidewalk; they were faded and soiled-looking in daylight. Beside the door, a plaque set into the wall repeated the message with more formality. A sign of the vulgar and one for the refined, Martin thought. . . . The house had all the incongruous dignity of a gravestone, set pat into the earth; the familiar paraphernalia of doors, windows, porch were altered ominously by the deathly dedication. Even the tube lights and the metal lettering and the folded awning did not disguise its concern with the dead. It was more than the empty eyes of the blinded windows, too; it had a character. Like me, he thought, it is identified with death.

Greene's decorum—his stylized juxtaposition—informs *The Edge of Doom*, but his terror does not.

—RILEY HUGHES

Georgetown University

BOOK REVIEWS

The Travelers. By Henry Rago. Golden Goose Press. \$1.00.

Henry Rago is well known to readers of *The Commonweal* and *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* through his distinguished work as critic and poet. The present slight volume represents a selection of his verse over a number of years.

This is delicate poetry of reminiscence and vision. At its best it has that light which is "the consecration and the poet's dream." The knack of these poems is the evocation of that inexpressible contemplation of experience for which the metaphor is the only language. One entire sequence of poems, indeed, is explicitly entitled "The Metaphor," and is constructed on analogies of terror. May I quote "Paris, A Sunday," as a specimen of the poet at his most musical and effulgent?

The light informs the trees, is palpable
As flags across the air and is the air.
Moving and moveless as a singing
shell
The day is secret, being much too
clear.

Borne by or bearing light, the street
is wonder.
No grammar of transparency can pass
Nor any logic learn the strength to
ponder
The weightless leaves, the morning
blown of glass.

I choose this poem because it is brief. Perhaps I choose it also because it is metred and rimed, and thus betray my preference.

Some of the verse is free, others in intricately rimed, subtle rhythms that approach blank verse as a norm. A few of the poems are in traditional stanzas.

While Eliot, Hopkins, Auden, and Miss Moore contribute to Mr. Rago's style ("Palma" seems to me to be the most derivative of the group), the poetic idea is sometimes more tenuous than any of these. One cannot always get into the poet's mind; the situations are often private, the metaphors and similes sometimes uncommunicative. This is hodiernal poetry. Some of it, unfortunately, I find incomprehensible. "Abstraction" uses highly mathematical concepts and terms. "An Epilogue" closes the slight volume, for me, with an enigma.

The success of many of these poems must be acknowledged. The distinction of all will be admitted by even the cursory reader. To the apprehension of some my mind, at any rate, presents an invincibly obtuse medium.

—VICTOR M. HAMM

Marquette University

New Contributors and Reviewers

CHARLES A. BRADY, Chairman of the English Department, Canisius College, is a frequent reviewer and the editor of *A Catholic Reader*.

SALLY W. CASSIDY contributes to *The Catholic World*, *Concord*, and *Etudes* and recently returned from France.

ELIZABETH L. ETNIRE spent last year at the University of San Marcos in Lima and is now in the Spanish Department in Webster College.

PIERRE GIRARD, who teaches French at Rice Institute, is spending this year doing research in France.

EVA-MARIA JUNG, educated in Germany and Italy, is librarian and instructor in the Mediaeval Institute of the University of Notre Dame.

GEORGE MCCAULIFF is a frequent reviewer and has written a poem on Merton which appeared in *Spirit*.

ARTHUR A. MacGILLIVRAY, S.J., Head of the English Department at Fairfield University, is a contributor to *Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins* and the author of a book of poems, *Sufficient Wisdom*.

HERBERT MARSHALL McLUHAN frequently contributes to the little magazines and teaches at St. Michael's College in the University of Toronto.

DAISY H. MOSELEY spent last Spring in Paris and contributes to *The Catholic World*, *The Sign*, *Commonweal*, etc.; she is the author of *Sunshine and Saints*.

FRANK O'MALLEY, Professor of the Philosophy of Literature at the University of Notre Dame, is co-founder and managing editor of *The Review of Politics*.

HENRY RAGO, who writes for *Commonweal*, *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, etc., teaches in the Humanities Division, University of Chicago.

H. A. REINHOLD is the author of a monthly column in *Orate Fratres* and the editor of a collection of mystical writings, *The Soul Afire*.

CHRISTIAN SCHNELLER is the pen name of a young German who will have a play produced next Spring at the Staatstheater in Munich.

ROBERT SPEAIGHT, well known for taking the rôle of Thomas Becket in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, is an English novelist, critic, and actor.

FRANCIS BEAUCHESNE THORNTON is the author of several volumes of poetry and the editor of *Return to Tradition*.

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